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Editor
O P Kejariwal



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सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री
PRIME MINISTER

FOREWORD

Fifty years is not a long time in the history of a nation. But it is an appropriate time to look back and take stock of what have we achieved, where we went wrong and what needs to be done. This, to my mind is a very important exercise, if we want India to gain its rightful place in the comity of nations. And one way of doing this is to get experts in various fields to assess our achievements and suggest the future course of action. In the last one year, we have seen several such compendiums, published both within and outside the country, where scholars have thrown light on different facets of our national life: our problems and potentials. While these publications have made valuable contributions to our understanding of India, I feel, there is scope for more. For review and reappraisal should be a continuous process.

I am glad to learn that the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, which publishes the quarterly Indian Horizons, is bringing out a special issue of the journal on the theme, **India at 50**. Under the able editorship of Dr. O.P. Kejariwal, this issue brings together more than 25 essays on a wide range of subjects like politics, economics, education and art and culture by some of our best known writers and experts. I am sure it will prove to be a valuable reference source for serious scholars as well as general readers who are interested in knowing about this great country of ours.


(A.B. Vajpayee)

New Delhi
26th December, 1998

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the January-June Issue of Indian Horizons, we had promised you a special issue of the 50th anniversary of India's Independence. Even before the work on this issue was over, we started contacting scholars and experts in various fields for contributions to this special issue. And the response was so overwhelming that we decided to make it the combined July-December issue for 1998. The present issue covering a wide range of subjects includes contributions from some of India's leading scholars, though we could not include all that we originally intended to. So we plan to continue this effort in our forthcoming issues and bring to you various facets of Indian life and thought.

This publication is the second in our effort to highlight independent India's achievements in her first fifty years. Recently, in collaboration with the Oxford University Press, New Delhi, the Council has separately brought out a commemorative volume to celebrate half a century of India's Independence. This anthology entitled "Independent India: The First Fifty Years" seeks to provide an appraisal of India's achievements in the half century since Independence as well as the problems which continue to challenge the nation. Both these books, with contributions from eminent men and women, who have not only significantly enriched their respective fields, but have also played important roles in influencing events and processes which have created the India of today, will, it is hoped, provide reading pleasure as also food for thought.


(Himachal Som)
Director-General

EDITORIAL

How does one go about compiling and editing a special issue of a quarterly journal? More precisely, how does one plan a special issue of *Indian Horizons* on the 50th anniversary of India's Independence? The question assumes awesome complexities as one thinks of the opportunities such an issue offers and the challenges it throws up. After all, this certainly is not the first such issue of a journal on this theme. On the contrary, this may be the last. Since the 50th anniversary celebrations began about two years ago, almost every journal, magazine and newspaper has come out with a special issue, sometimes a series of them, on the theme of **India at 50**. Publishing houses brought out commemorative volumes and even foreign journals like *Granta* thought it fit to devote an entire issue to the "Idea of India". This, of course, gave us the benefit of hindsight. We knew who has written on what and where? At the same time it created for us the challenge of avoiding repetition without losing sight of the key areas. For a country of India's size and diversity this may sound as trivia, but we did face this question as we went about planning this issue.


Fortunately for us, around the time we began work on this issue, a couple of things happened on the national scene which, to my mind, are bound to have long-term implications and allowed us to cover fresh ground. The first was the 1998 General Elections which, for the third time in a row, produced a hung Parliament and installed the Bharatiya Janata Party led 18 party coalition government at the Centre. This raised fresh questions about our polity and 50 years of democratic experiment. The second, which followed from the first, was the decision

of the BJP led government to explode nuclear devices at Pokhran in May this year and proclaim India as a nuclear power. The international reaction to the second event was swift and critical while within the country odd notes of protest marred an otherwise seemingly broad consensus on the nuclear question. Nevertheless, these two events together provided a little extra grist to our mill.

We open the issue with a personal review of the Indian political scene by our former Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao. As a person who has seen it all from close quarters and has himself been at the helm of affairs for five years, Mr. Rao provides rare insight into the working of Indian political system. This is followed by an erudite essay by our most well known economist and Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, who points out the successes and failures of the Indian system in providing its citizens a good standard of living. Four other essays constitute the opening section of this issue. Noted Jurist L M Singhvi traces the evolution of the Indian Constitution, Political Analyst, N Ram sees success of Indian federalism in today's coalition politics, former diplomat J N Dixit reviews India's foreign policy in the light of the Pokhran explosions and Defence Analyst, K Subramaniam, who has recently been appointed the Convener of the National Security Council, provides the rationale for India going nuclear.

The second part of the issue has 23 essays grouped under headings as diverse as Agriculture, Economy, Environment, Health, Women, Culture and Sports. In every sphere, it has been our sincere effort to present more than one point of view for we felt that is the only way we can highlight the individual tiles in this complex mosaic called India. It is not that we have fully succeeded in this effort and can now claim that this presents a complete picture of India and its people. Many topics had to be left out for paucity of space, many writers we intended to have on our roll of honours were not available and some others promised to contribute but did not despite repeated reminders. Yet we sincerely hope

that this issue, as it stands today, approximates the ideal picture of a 50 year old young nation with five thousand years of civilizational history.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O.P. Kejariwal', with a stylized, cursive script.

(O.P. Kejariwal)

INDIA AT 50: A PERSONAL VIEW

P V Narasimha Rao

Fifty years are not a very long period in the history of an ageless, ancient country. Even so, India's fifty-year story since independence is so vast that it cannot be comprehensively dealt with in a short article. Yet, all I could do is to attempt to show a huge mountain in a small mirror.

The Economy

In this appraisal, we take the economy first, as it reflects the present position at first sight. Here we need to keep aside both our propensity for self-condemnation as also for excessive self-adulation. First of all, look at the magnitude of the task our economy entailed during the period under review. Our population has tripled since Independence. The increase was not because of any sudden explosion of procreation in free India. The birth rate was already high in the past, but the mortality rates were also high. Our health schemes in the last 50 years, even if not brilliant and leaving much to be desired, did bring in marked improvement in infant survival, mother survival, relief from several communicative and non-communicative diseases—thus increasing net population and life expectancy. This is a happy example where success brings in its own problems, but we do not grudge them, evidently.

With this burgeoning population we became self-sufficient in food and clothing. And the Indian farmer has proved that even without much formal education, he is

quick to adopt every single scientific method brought to him, the moment he is convinced that it is for his benefit. This augurs well for the future.

However, India has not done well enough on the quantitative, mass side. Already poor when freedom came, she could not meet the increasing needs at mass level plus the huge backlog of wants and problems inherited along with freedom: primary and secondary education, primary health, housing for the poor, primary levels of nutrition etc. at the mass level. I said 'well enough' because even in this area, what was done was massive (such as the phenomenal expansion of educational facilities etc.), but the needs have galloped faster, leading to overall shortfall. Besides, quantitative expansion was not accompanied or followed by qualitative improvement, such as in education. The main (though not the sole) reason for these inadequacies was paucity of funds, or continuing poverty, and not any inherent complication in solving the problems, at least in many cases. If the Government could build, say ten million rural houses (admittedly), it could as well have built twenty. And so on. No matter which political party rules, these are basic, irrefutable facts.

It is clear therefore that more incomes to the people at all levels would be the main solution to these ills, if the country does not have to lose its Independence and become a mendicant or a dependent. In any event, India is too big to find an adequate alms-giver, or a big enough prop to lean on for all time without crushing the prop itself. The Indian elephant must stand on its own legs. This is very much in line with India's traditional thinking wherein 'work' is glorified in many ways. In the *Gita* the Lord Himself declares:

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्य त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्य वर्त एवच कर्मणि ।

(In the three worlds, no work is prescribed for Me; nor am I in want of anything. Even so, I do my *karma* all the

time.) In this exalted view of *karma*, idleness has no place and even compensated unemployment is not an adequate substitute for genuine gainful employment. Employment is not only connected with livelihood; it has a profound effect on a person's self-esteem.

I shall now dwell upon the rationale of the mixed economy pattern adopted in the early fifties, under Jawaharlal Nehru. I shall just relate one personal anecdote to illustrate the point. It was some time in 1952. A childhood friend of mine, who was the son of a doctor in a mission hospital of a prominent western country in my district headquarters town, suddenly ran into me at Hyderabad on one of his visits to India. We began talking of several things, among them the idea of the public sector in general and a steel factory in particular in India. He was so shocked at what he thought we were doing in this country that he almost shouted, in a friendly tone of course, 'What madness is this? Why do you need a steel factory when my country is willing to give you as much steel as you need? And what is this ramshackle cars you are using? We could supply you any number—and by any, I mean any—number of beautiful automobiles?' And so forth. I thanked him for his generosity and goodwill—but paradoxically, the way he said it, I was convinced more than ever before of the need of the public sector in India at the time!

The public sector—being in charge of the 'commanding heights' of the economy—was to take care of the establishment of the infrastructure from public funds, and its expansion, to the maximum extent possible, from its earnings. But for various reasons, this did not happen; instead, the public sector itself soaked more and more public funds, decade after decade. The basic infrastructure set up by the public sector was magnificent by any standards and has stood the country in good stead. However, the Government could not adequately fund its much-needed expansion and timely modernization. The result has been stagnation, compounded by obsolescence.

The utility of foreign investment, when it was first tried in a big way in 1991 (although initiated in the previous regimes), was to relieve the Government of its massive commitments on large infrastructure projects (such as power, fertiliser, highways etc.). Given these inescapable priorities, we could not spare enough fund for human resource development. The Government had spread its resources too wide, too thin, on too many things, for too long. If only foreign investment could take care of a major part of these giant infrastructure projects, this would enable the Government to utilize more of its own resources on education, health and social assistance. In addition, industrialization would bring jobs to the educated sector. In the eyes of the layman, at any rate, this was the practical advantage of foreign investment (which was understood as investment from outside the Government, whether foreign or Indian in origin); he saw it as a huge extra investment for his benefit. Economists, of course, went into all the ins and outs of the matter and said, in effect, more or less the same thing, and much more on the theoretical side into which we need not go. The Finance Ministry played a leading part in working out the modified policy and its implementation; the other economic ministries joined in the exercise. They called this economic reforms that have enjoyed consensus ever since, by and large.

It did work out as intended, in the beginning. A massive allocation of Rs.30,000 crores for rural development in the eighth plan, from around Rs.10,000 crores in the seventh; a courageous public commitment that India would step up its expenditure on education to 6 per cent of the GNP by the end of the ninth plan; launching several *yojana* targeting almost every group of the poor; well-conceived schemes of social assistance nation-wide—these measures are enough to show how our liberalization began with great promise and enhanced our self-confidence. The fund flows for rural development to the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) continued steadily; indeed in some instances, the money

going from Delhi accounted for the whole of the development activity in the state. It must be emphasised, besides, that India's liberalization was well tailored to the country's specific needs and priorities. For instance, no 'exit policy' was adopted, since the consequent risk of large numbers of workers losing their jobs simply could not be overlooked. Instead, a National Renewal Fund was envisaged for the purpose, even if it had some flaws and needed to be perfected over time. Again, liberalization in India, unlike in some other countries, did not *ipso facto* mean total privatization. Government clearly told prospective investors not to be eyeing our existing public sector units for take-over, but to concentrate on starting new industries to fulfil the large requirement not covered by the Public Sector. Thus the new thinking did not fly in the face of our mixed economy. The Government simply altered the mix, as required by circumstances. The policy is continuing, as I understand.

However, the sum-total of foreign investment was not massive enough to make a real dent on the situation, even though the direction was right. A hundred-fold increase in investment would still go unnoticed in this vast investment-parched country. What was worse, the emphasis on infrastructure became a halting starter and the results have been poor. If infrastructure is left out, it is difficult to see how foreign investment on a large scale would be of any specific public benefit here. The power sector, for instance, deserves top priority. Some reasons of these shortfalls are said to be the investor's perception of our political stability and practical difficulties in restructuring procedures, some of which continue as irritants. Much has been done, admittedly, but this is a continuous process and could be hastened up to a point only and no further at any given time, for obvious reasons. Even so, investment on infrastructure is well worth bending backwards to secure and needs further efforts. Besides, after trying out the new line of policy and action for over eight years, it is now high time to look back and evaluate its actual effects on different

sections of the people—particularly those who constitute the neediest base of the population pyramid.

The directions in which national efforts should be intensified hereafter consist, very roughly and in very lay language, of :

a) Increase in incomes, down to the very bottom levels of the population pyramid. Every layer needs to be covered conscientiously, either separately or in an integrated manner. Neither trickle-down nor trusteeship would work, as things stand today.

b) Limitation of population at a definite level, by a pre-determined point of time. Evidently it will have to be at a high enough level, to be realistic. But it needs to be definite. As is well known, thereby hangs a sad tale and the subject somehow looks like something dangerous lying on the road, which everyone warns you not to touch. The widely varying figures from different States tell their own story. Some States seem to have formidable hurdles, but not many are willing to talk about them.

c) Development of human resource infrastructure. This is a large basket, and is self-explanatory. My only strong suggestion is that 'education' should include 'skills,' from the beginning. This suggestion is amply justified by the remarkable success our technical institutions have achieved. Our IIT boys and girls are said to be recruited to lucrative posts abroad even in anticipation of passing their final examinations. Both for diligence and intelligence, they have made a name.

The country has done well also in several other fields—like technological self-reliance, growing consciousness of the environment, defence preparedness, social awareness, conduct of foreign policy and other areas. It is well placed for future progress. It is in a position to strive further for higher benefits—for itself and for the world—indeed its own benefit as a part of the world's. Whether Pokhran II is poised to enhance this prospect, or dim it—since one of the two is bound to happen—there is no harm in taking the optimistic view until...

The Political Scene

India is the world's largest democracy and this is a signal distinction. We all know that it is both a system of governance and a way of life. It is both an end in itself and also a means to an end. If it fails to deliver on any of these counts, it is bound to be embroiled in troubles and hurdles. This becomes ominous in a poor, populous and ancient country over-burdened with a long history of political in-fighting, most often for personal or dynastic power. The silver lining is that we also continue to have cultural harmony and social cohesion among the people which keep them together and largely attenuate the infighting.

Whether by multiplicity of contestants (sometimes running into hundreds for each seat) or numerous other factors, the edifice and the process of democracy are wobbling widely today and are unable to set the 'chair of governance' right and stable even physically. For some years past, no one could explain the exact mandate the people gave in a given election. Each political party had full justification to say that no other party got a better mandate than it did! So several parties jointly sit on the chair, each for its own different purpose. In this harassed scramble not many of them seem to be able even to sit firmly... So the system appears to have become unstable and unpredictable during the last few of the fifty years it has operated. This is a cause for concern.

The other aspect of democracy namely, of delivering the goods to the people, is extremely important for strengthening the system itself. Democracy, in order to survive, requires that the people have a strong stake in it. After fifty years of democratic rule, we find some basic questions being raised in some quarters. They ask for a clear and truthful balance sheet of successes and failures that could specifically be attributed to the system as such. Had we not chosen this system, would the country have been better off or worse off today? Some believe that the very momentum of economic and cultural unity, coupled

with the fact that we are a free people now, would have brought progress to the country anyway. Some even bluntly declare that we would have been better off under some other system. The other equally confident answer comes from many who are convinced that without democracy we would never have achieved anything beyond the known story of medieval anarchies all over, which is most probably what we would have reverted to. What causes consternation is that this kind of debate should arise after fifty years, suggesting that democracy is still on probation.

Then arises the next question: How much attention are we in fact able to devote to the country's massive substantive problems? This would naturally depend on the extent to which the vote was connected with the problems. The simple belief was, to begin with, that political parties would approach the voters with a variety of programmes offered through their manifestoes and that the voters would choose accordingly. But within a short time, the voting process itself was made to subserve widely varying purposes. For instance, some votes are completely dedicated to prevent a candidate, a caste or a section of people (or a particular party) from winning, it is a single-item manifesto—anti-this or anti-that. There is no other programme because anti-anything is itself the sole programme! Then the personal element gradually entered and entrenched itself in the political process. Benefit to the community no longer remained the sole purpose, benefit to the individual began to dominate more and more. Some representatives of the people often fell a prey to this temptation and in the case of the voters too, in thousands of cases, the purpose is the benefit of the day, with nothing to care for the next five years! Then we have the faction fights—old and new—from long-drawn hereditary mutual murder series and ruinous litigation. A less bloody variation of the feuds—of getting each other defeated in the election or getting unseated after being elected—has emerged in many areas. All these are out of line with the main purpose of the election and

pollute the system. The situation is similar to feudal vendetta that continues for generations.

Even if briefly, the politician's side needs to be mentioned here. Ideally, he is expected to serve the people, do his duties as MLA or MP etc., if he happens to be one, keep in constant contact with his constituency (being always conscious that for the slightest lapse in this regard, the complaint of inaccessibility gets slapped on him). In case he is not an MLA or MP, his situation is worse. To meet the people he is serving, he has to spend his own money, if he wants to escape the charge of corruption. He has also to follow his profession to keep body and soul together—may be farming or some small business in the village. He should clearly understand that his business has no business to grow, no matter what. Else, the presumption of corrupt methods in the growth of his business is bound to be raised. The flip side, of course, is that the businesses of some politicians are seen growing phenomenally! It is this politically induced growth that brands the whole tribe. Career consultancy is a highly developed discipline today, but I doubt if it has ever been applied with any dependable accuracy to the snakes-and-ladders game of politics as a career.

However, it is an undeniable fact that thousands of those termed 'political workers' participated in the freedom struggle. Many were arrested and jailed, some lost their lives in confrontation with the British Government. But by far the largest number consisted of those motivated young men and women who constituted the most visible face of the teeming masses who came out boldly to demonstrate their determination, some of whom were thrashed and let off, many taken to the middle of the reserve forests and left there, to trek their way back in the company of wild beasts in dark and deadly nights. When freedom came, some leaders became ministers, but the workers, no less intoxicated by the glow of independence, remained at a loose end, only to become active at election time. Later, some of them were chosen for the *Panchayats* and some local committees. The rest

were footloose, some had been freedom fighters in their own right and their sacrifices were recognised to some extent by Indiraji's scheme of pension, to keep body and soul together. Those who survived could have been engaged in constructive activities in the villages, as some had indeed been. However, after Governmental (including local) formations came into being, the political activists found himself largely unoccupied; many of them took refuge in the 'groups' that had meanwhile sprung up. They were also sucked into individual and perhaps caste patronage wherever available and became part, willingly or unwillingly, of the faction-ridden atmosphere built up under powerful satraps. Thus the massive and spontaneous patriotism of the grass-roots level evident in the earlier stages got largely distorted. It was an unhappy development. Unhappier still is the resultant denouncement that depicts the politician as the sole source of all that is corrupt and evil today. Apart from the hyperbole that attends it, this generalization spreading from generation to generation, bodes ill for democracy.

Whatever the theory or theology, the fact is that politics has emerged as a career—where there is no security, not much acknowledgement of work done, since the emphasis is almost always on what was not done, and eventually, little job satisfaction. This may sound as a depressing description, yet many of the ills politicians are prone to could perhaps be traced to these characteristics of the political process, compounded by the vagaries of the electoral race which, in addition to its extreme uncertainty as a career, now threatens to become costlier and costlier in a steep geometric progression.

The cost of elections has already become an insoluble problem and deserves utmost attention. Beginning with state funding, some remedies have been thought of but they do not seem to be really effective. As a result, there is no enthusiasm to fight elections with the current periodicity of one or two years. And when this becomes

a near-regular feature, it is not difficult to imagine what kind of candidates will stand this overdose of democracy. To the political activist, therefore, the parliamentary arena can at best afford a dented co-career and no more. No wonder that it does not hold much attraction for the sensible career-minded educated younger generation in general.

The Political Party

Amidst these distortions, we need to consider what has happened to the political party as the basic building block of democracy. Jai Prakash Narain and some other leaders had enunciated the idea of a party-less democracy in the early fifties; but it was adopted only in some states for *Panchayat* and local elections. The Constitution did not mention the 'party' until very recently, yet the system followed was of party democracy. It started well in the beginning, but gradually the promises of all parties tended to become almost identical and were not honoured once the election was over. As a result, the binding force of the party as a political entity uniting the people of a particular persuasion dwindled fast. So, when political ideology fell on evil days, other factors well-known for centuries—such as personal interest, caste affinity, religious identity, local faction or the effect of the money or other inducement that had been common currency in the feudal era—inevitably reappeared to fill the vacuum. The modern political party became brittle in purpose, then broke internally into groups operating with individuals with clout as the rallying points. The party itself thus became feudalized and factionalized. Some western scholars describe the phenomenon as politicization of the existing caste structure. This might have been so in some places for the simple reason that even before the advent of regular political parties as we know them today, there did exist group contentions and rivalries all the time—human nature being what it always was. If they had often taken the form of caste-based confrontation, there could be no great surprise, since

caste was one of the very few well-known dividing lines in the society. But many political activists will testify that there was a period during which the political ideal—like independence, abolition of zamindari etc.—dominated the scene for quite some time, subordinating the caste and all other factors to a large extent and keeping them separate from the political process—in other words, making the process ‘casteless’ more correctly, regardless of caste. Similarly, Indira Gandhi’s slogan of *garibi hatao* also cut across all castes and covered all the poor, of whatever caste or community—and the middle class also—so long as appropriate programmes recognizable by the people sustained its credibility. Be that as it may, things have changed and today it is caste, religion and individual domination that tend to loom large. They also have their mutual struggle for survival, for instance, casteism and communalism claim to operate, each to contain and fight against the other. Whatever the truth, the polity is suffering from both. The logic of the individual, when converted into democratic idiom is: ‘If the party benefits me, I am with the party, if it doesn’t, I go to another party, or form one myself which will benefit me.’ Coming into and going out of parties became very easy, particularly for influential persons. This strategy has become common and is practised on a large scale. With such undesirable developments, what more remains, then, for the demise of the political party?

Going a bit into the fine print, one can see that, for quite some time, caste has been the subject matter of discussion and political action. One could find a broad correspondence between caste and economic status, although they could not be taken as synonymous for obvious factual and conceptual reasons. The criteria of social and educational backwardness were taken as the basis for reservation in government services at certain levels. At the Centre, however, the matter got caught in political controversy and the Mandal Commission’s report remained in hibernation. It was sorted out

eventually, followed by a thorough judicial scrutiny and pronouncement by the Supreme Court. Thus caste has now come to play a role much wider than it used to in the earlier years, before and after independence. And the caste group has become a vote bank. The process is going strong and one does not quite know where it will stop, and what socio-political picture will eventually emerge.

By forming similar groups, ambitious leaders carve up for themselves separate chunks in every political party's original vote. This, evidently, is done on different bases such as caste, sub-caste, community, region, language—you name it. Voting in a democracy, as a rule, is based on what the participating political parties promise to do for the people during the ensuing terms, in addition to impressing the voter by what they did in the past; it is thus a limited and time-bound contract, open to review every five years. Instead, where the voter is asked, directly or indirectly, to vote on the basis of religion or caste he or she is born into, there is just no choice and this cannot be called an election, which means choice. In a pluralist society such as ours, secular democracy involves the exercise of this free and overt choice, the party being the vehicle. So, if the political party is to be saved from the danger of losing its relevance, no party man, however important otherwise, should be tolerated when he divides the party's vote by these methods. Heavens would not fall if the party high command takes stringent action against such individuals. An odd person here and there may get elected once as an independent, but after that he becomes totally irrelevant if the party is firm. The party, of course, needs to hone its sensitivity to the dictates of social justice all the time, subsuming the urges of the people effectively and taking a long-term and harmonious view. Otherwise it becomes an aggregate of gangs owing allegiance to different internal satraps whose own infighting, in turn, brings about a pervasive atmosphere of caste-hate and the political party's eventual collapse—again a situation akin to the familiar centrifugal scenario from our medieval history. While the

caste factor gets into the political battle by a series of insensitivities on the part of political parties, there appears no valid reason whatever to let religion enter the political process. If, unfortunately, each religious community is branded as a party participating in election, the election itself becomes superfluous. It makes a mockery of the democratic system and destroys its most important ingredient—CHOICE.

A lot needs to be done to make the political party useful and relevant to the people's lives, outside the limited activity of elections and accession to power. By its very nature, democracy operates to bring changes in the ruling parties. The activities of the political parties should therefore be much wider than the electoral process, a whole series of programmes to work among the people; once upon a time, it was known as Mahatma Gandhi's constructive programme in the Congress. Parties out of power need not be obsessed with destabilizing the government of the day by hook or crook. The constructive programme—or something akin to it fashioned for today's circumstances—could engage the intense attention of party men and women who happen to be out of government or Parliament for the time being. It would be still better if some of them decide to keep out of the legislative activity voluntarily for a pre-determined period, five or ten years, and devote their full energy to one of these programmes. This need is more than established by the plethora of instances where the Government's effort alone, by itself, falls far short of even minimal expectations. So there is a lot to do outside the government. Eventually, all the programmes lead to the party's credit, and with political will, all party men and women could have the satisfaction of serving the people. The present de-stabilization process prevents every party's performance from being properly tested, hence there is eventually no answerability. This is a game all can play, to the detriment of the system. However, the weight of their own internal bickerings and incompatibilities has pulverized combinations and

coalitions in power; this proves that every 'crowd of convenience' is not a proper coalition and therefore need not necessarily last. Their frequent fall damages democracy and makes for greater irresponsibility. Since many politicians seem to think that single-party governments are not going to come back in the near future, it becomes our duty to work out the possible contours and content of a viable coalition in our conditions, regardless of whether we agree or not with the above prognosis. And this needs to be done before going to the elections and not be cobbled up after the poll. We cannot afford a single day without a purposeful and forward-looking government, of whatever variety.

One devoutly wishes that the politics of personality gave place to the politics of performance as soon as we could manage the switch. When performance largely becomes the basis of choice or rejection, both between parties, (as it should be) as also of preference between persons in the same party, many of the negative trends found today could be minimized. I have an uneasy feeling that this straight-forward method has not been tried as intensively as it ought to have been. No party, for instance, has scrutinized the performance of even one of its Chief Ministers and taken him to task on the basis of his failures (although several have been eased out for 'other' reasons). As things stand, keeping oneself in power anyhow is the name of the game. The result is that almost every individual is busy protecting his political flanks most of the time, whether in or out of power. If performance could be incorporated (at least to the extent practicable in a process where several other considerations jostle against one another all the time) as a criterion in evaluating a politician's career, the country would stand to gain much. This lapse on the part of party men eventually recoils on the party itself.

Electoral reforms have been talked about for a long time; some measures also have been taken from time to time. But the maladies have not abated, they seem to be on the rise. Measures like a National Government, fixed-

term and non-dissoluble legislature, the Presidential system and many other ideas have been suggested to deal with specific defects in the system. However, educating the people in the country's interest as well as their own is the most important task without which unscrupulous persons can muck up every good suggestion eventually. In the ultimate analysis, the voter is the antidote for all the ills of the democratic process. It is not possible to elaborate further in this article, yet the subject brooks no delay. There are a number of directions in which reforms need to be pressed. A few quick points, important enough to arrest attention today, could perhaps be mentioned in a few words.

From 1971 onwards, mainly at Indiraji's instance, elections to the *Lok Sabha* and the *Vidhan Sabhas* were separated. The basis of the separation was that the issue of the central and state governments are clearly different and the voter, in fairness, should be kept aware of this while voting. However, the situation in this respect today is not quite happy. Putting it tersely, we find a running tension between MP-candidates and sitting MLAs or MLA-candidates and sitting MPs. They are often seen working at cross-purposes, to the extent of sabotaging each other's chances in the election. Further, I am not at all sure that the common voter appreciates the difference between the two elections and knows what to expect at each. That basic consideration does not seem to have succeeded; it has brought in several evils in the bargain. Several partymen therefore feel that it is time to think of simultaneous elections to the *Lok Sabha* and the Assemblies, as it was prior to 1971. Let the party candidates at least share common electoral fortunes, which is only fair.

One feels extremely embarrassed to note that some money-bags jumping in the elections to the Rajya Sabha or the State Legislative Councils, solely on the merit of money, has by now become a regular feature. This is, by and large, confined to the 'Assembly constituency' from which a specified number of members are elected. In this

battle, there are two categories of candidates—party candidates and money candidates. Secret ballot often seems to be the villain of the piece here. Unfortunately, the fray often results in a total mix-up and in the defeat of some party candidates by the superior pressure of the money candidates. The entire subject of these indirect elections—if these are to be retained at all—needs to be reviewed, with a view to making them fair and transparent. We could also do away with secret ballot in these elections, as a first step.

I have mentioned the evil of party defections above. To some extent the anti-defection law has prevented defections, particularly from parties with large numbers. But in case of parties with small numbers, where managing one-third of the party to make it technically a 'split' is not very difficult, this law has been misused with impunity. One could think of some sliding scale, to make it effective in small-numbered parties as well, in case the more radical view of treating defection as resignation from the House automatically is considered too harsh. This is because, for ideological reasons, many partymen believe that the freedom to change one's party under certain genuine political exigencies, without automatic loss of membership of the House, should not be completely abolished. There are also hidden reasons, concerned with intra-party vendetta, about which one does not like to talk candidly...

To recapitulate, the foremost need is to re-establish the political party's democratic sanctity. These comments apply to all parties. The return of the party voter's loyalty and affection for the party (which had galvanized the party to any national task during the freedom movement and can do so again) is the first necessity today. Then, if the voter is really dedicated to a party, any dishonest and disloyal leader of that party would find it extremely difficult to make such a voter vote against the party; it is not that difficult today, unfortunately. It is from that point of 'building the voter' that reform and revamp of any party should begin. This is possible only if the status

of each partyman or partywoman is clearly defined by genuine elections and not on the patronage or concession of co-option or nomination. It looks very illogical to have undemocratic and hand-picked formations calling themselves political parties and running a party democracy, almost permanently and as a favoured method. To change this is no doubt a Herculean task, after letting it remain unattended to for a long time; we are all responsible, and no one could claim innocence in this. Deep introspection and bold decisions are needed to establish genuine internal democracy in our political parties. I have no manner of doubt that it can be done and must be done, perhaps before anything else. Once any determined reform is commenced in right earnest, it will pick up its own momentum. We cannot face the future with 'groupocracy.'

Only a few high priority issues have been dealt with in the foregoing paragraphs. The task is much bigger and more complicated. Yet if one has to begin re-stitching the torn garment somewhere, the openings mentioned above could be as good as any. ▣

INDIA: WHAT PROSPECTS?

Amartya Sen

As the celebrations of the half-centenary of Indian Independence come to an end, the time has come for us to look forward, rather than continuing to dwell on the past. What do the prospects look like, at this time, for the years to come? What should we expect? Or better, what can we expect? Or better still, how can we make the future more acceptable? In the context of the last question, examining the past acquires a new relevance—not so much for celebration or despair, but as the basis of critique and learning. The future will not be quite like the past and the problem we face may well be very different, but still there are things that we can learn from the mistakes that were made, so that we can avoid the same—or similar—blunders in the future.

Globalization and Domestic Disparities

The scrutiny of the past has to be combined with some diagnosis of the new challenges of the future. I believe two problem areas stand out very sharply at this time: the challenge of globalization (an external encounter), and that of domestic disparity (an internal threat). I shall argue that the two issues closely link with each other, and an appropriate approach to globalization would require that adequate attention be paid to the problems of domestic disparity.

Globalization has been gathering momentum rapidly across the world. The globe is getting smaller remarkably fast, bringing with it new opportunities as well as fresh

problems. Can we make good use of world trade, reap serious benefits from it, without being battered or marginalized? Would economic integration help us in general, or should we do our best to resist it? Will there be losers as well as gainers, and who will they be? How can the threat to the potential losers be reduced or eliminated? Economics is not, of course, the only subject affected by globalization, and there are, in particular, cultural matters. Are our traditions under threat in the new world order of Coca Cola, MacDonalds and MTV—new empires on which the sun never sets? I have tried to discuss the cultural issues elsewhere,¹ but shall not have the chance to go into them here, except for making a couple of simple points towards the end.

Turning to internal matters, will the growth of disparity—already so sharp—continue unchecked, or perhaps even accelerate? Disparities related to class, on the one hand, and regions, on the other, are both remarkably large, and so is gender inequality between women and men. For example, in terms of regional contrast, at one end of the spectrum, Indian women in Kerala now have a life expectancy at birth of around 75 years (almost similar to that in the very rich countries), and are closing towards full literacy for the young, and have fertility rates similar to Britain or France and much lower than the United States of America. At the other end of the spectrum, Indian women in Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh do worse than many of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of some of these attributes. If the Indian states were independent countries, then in the league table of indicators of quality of life, Indian states would figure at the top as well as at the bottom.

In terms of class, rather than region, while the Indian middle class now has grown to be extraordinarily sizable and has tasted real success in the recent decades, the enormous population of the poverty-stricken and the dispossessed has grown even larger in absolute numbers, becoming the biggest army of the poor in the world.

Indeed, India has the dubious distinction of having both the largest number of the poor in the world, and also the largest middle class on earth. India is, in fact, many different lands packed into one. Will that packing last? Even if it does not come unstuck, can we really live at peace with such massive contrasts?

Participation and Distribution

Both these issues—globalization and internal disparity—involve the challenge of participation, and this is one of several ways in which they link with each other. Participation can be the basis of mutual gain—possibly massive gain for all—but it need not always lead to this result. Much depends on the terms of participation and the distribution of the fruits it can generate and the costs it imposes. Globalization entails participation of one kind, and domestic economic and social development involves participation of other types. We have to examine each and explore their interrelations.

Can India participate in the world economic order in terms that are fair and gainful for us? Can the different sections of the Indian society participate in globalization without some being pushed to the wall? These are difficult questions, but they demand our serious attention. There are exacting questions also in the matter of internal disparities. Can the different regions of India learn from each other (as well as from the rest of the world), and put those lessons into practice? Turning to class as opposed to region, how can the impoverished and the deprived participate in the process of economic expansion and social progress and not be left as hopeless losers? The general issue of fair participation can inform the analysis of the particular problems that India face right now—both in the context of globalization and that of internal disparities.

Governance and its Failures

With this background of the challenges of the future, we can scrutinize India's past experience, especially on matters of economic and social policy. It is useful to ask

what mistakes were made in Indian planning and governance. This question has often been asked over the last decade, particularly so in the discussions that accompanied the process of economic reforms initiated in 1991.

In addressing this question, some critics seem to have preferred to look for a simple slogan, rather than an adequately informed answer. The slogan that has gained much support sees India's folly in 'over-active governance', and it focuses our attention on excessive governmental interference in the market mechanism and points the accusing finger at the interventionist planners.

This does make a nice slogan—it is neat and tidy and half-true. Like all half-truths, evidence can be offered in defence of this diagnosis. The 'license Raj' did make economic initiatives difficult, produced lots of inefficient industries, and led to many allocational distortions (often in the name of protecting the poor, but doing very little of it)

Some time the over-activity of the government reached comic proportions. I remember, for example, a gentle occasion some years ago when I was waiting patiently at the table of a functionary of the Reserve Bank of India in New Delhi. I heard him explain on the telephone, evidently to a woman seeking foreign exchange to go abroad to see her sister, why this was not possible: "Did you say you visited your sister last year? Well, that rules it out. You see, the Government of India is extremely keen on sisters seeing sisters, but it must be only once every two years!"

Failure of Governmental Responsibility

I am sure everyone in this audience can tell similar accounts. And yet it is hard to see the government as over-active in a country where half the adult population is illiterate. Two thirds of the adult women can neither read nor write. The Education Ministry's enrolment data suggest a rosy picture of how things are changing for the young, but these statistics are not worth the paper on which they are written. The official data on school enrolment come

from the schools themselves which have every incentive to overstate the numbers. The Census gives a very difficult—and much more depressing—picture, which broadly tallies with what the National Sample Surveys report. The grim accounts that emerge from these reports are confirmed by independent surveys as well. It appears that even in the late 1980s, half the rural girls aged 12–14 have never been enrolled in any school whatsoever.² Nor is the situation changing rapidly. In fact, even with the low-schooling rates, the teacher-pupil ratios seem to be falling steadily. There are 19 teachers per 1,000 pupils in 1976, which fell to about 17 by 1986, and then to about 16 by 1996. This is a dismal picture both in terms of the quantity of schooling and the quality of it. If this is over-activity, one wonders what under-activity would be like.

Nor are there many signs of over-activity in the general lack of public health facilities and of nutritional intervention, or in the fact that the proportion of children with protein-energy undernourishment in India is about the highest in the world (between 40 to 60 per cent, compared with 20 to 40 per cent even in trouble-torn sub-Saharan Africa).³ Programmes of land reforms remain largely incomplete in most parts of India. The inequality between women and men, and between girls and boys, also remain extraordinarily large, with differences in education, health care, and even survival. The survival differences are reflected by the grim calculation of tens of millions of “missing women”—who are dead because of gender inequalities in health care.⁴

In a book entitled *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunities*, I have had the occasion, jointly with Jean Dreze, to take stock of what has and has not been achieved. The nature, intensity and reach of the observed disparities are altogether remarkable, and many of the failures (especially in education, health care and land reforms) relate directly to the abdication of governmental responsibilities. The slogan of over-governance does not match the reality of shocking under-activity in some spheres, with gross over-indulgence in others. A sweeping



Inequality between men and women remain extraordinarily large.

failure of governance, there certainly has been. But governmental over-activity, in general, is not the story—indeed quite the contrary.

The mis-diagnosis has been costly for India, since the economic reforms have been quite lopsided. Attempts to curb the Government's negative interferences, especially in industry and trade, have been in general rightly inspired, and one could wish that things had gone even faster in this respect. But there is continued neglect of government's positive responsibilities in bringing about faster expansion and more equitable sharing of social and economic opportunities. There is, to be sure, more verbal recognition now of the scandalous state of elementary education, basic health care, nutritional support, and land reforms, and of social and economic opportunities in general, compared with the hard anti-government rhetoric of a few years ago. But the rhetorical reform has not been matched by practical actions, and the hiatus in economic and social policy remains largely unrepaired, unaddressed and unattended.

Globalization, Sharing and Social Opportunity

How does this issue relate to the challenges of globalization and those of internal disparity? I would say they link very closely indeed. There can be little doubt that India can achieve high growth of aggregate GNP, even with its present neglect of shared social opportunities, since there are still a lot of literate and well-placed people around. Even though many Universities are in a sad state, it is still the case that India trains a very large number of people in higher fields of learning and technology reasonably well. For every person China sends to University, we send six. Even with a half illiterate adult population and with two-thirds of adult women unlettered, India can nevertheless achieve much progress in industries that make good use of its advantage in higher education and technical training. Bill Gates is right to praise India's technical and professional expertise, and high-technology centres like

Bangalore, can prosper and flourish, given governmental encouragement, rather than hindrance.

However, even a hundred Bangalores will not, on their own, solve India's tenacious poverty, deep-seated inequality and widespread social and economic exclusion.. The remedying of these deprivations and inequalities calls for more participatory growth on a wide basis, which is not easy to achieve across the barriers of illiteracy, ill health, and extraordinary inequalities in social and economic opportunities. The persistence of disparities is at least as much due to negligent governance as to any other cause.

In fact, the possibility of losing out in the process of globalization relates closely to the neglect of social opportunities. Participation in a globalizing world economy requires adherence to the discipline of quality control, production to specification, and informed economic collaboration. People with no schooling—with no literacy or numeracy—cannot easily cross the barriers to participating gainfully in global economic arrangements. On the other hand, they can lose their jobs and occupations from global competition from countries without India's self-perpetuated handicaps. If the socially ill-placed in India gain little and lose a lot from globalization, the fault does not lie in globalization itself, but in the terrible state of education and other ingredients of basic opportunities at home.

Of course, globalization can also hit employees in inefficient and uncompetitive industrial units, as these units go bankrupt, and the predicament of the displaced people demand attention. In a dynamic economy, such rearrangements, while distressing in the short run, can be made out to work for the benefit of all within very few years, and care can also be taken to address the short-run problems. What is called for is not the preservation of inefficient work arrangements in protected mausoleums, but economic and social policies that work towards absorbing the displaced and disestablished in new employment and new economic activities. This process can be greatly helped by the government's taking

a forward-looking view, concentrating in particular on economic incentives for job creation and social opportunities for wide participation. Curbing governmental over-activity is not adequate for this.

It would be a great mistake to see globalization as being an inescapable harbinger of downfall and misery. Global participation is basically an enhancement of economic opportunity, and its benefits can be plentifully reaped and its costs minimized through appropriate domestic policies, paying particular attention to the availability and distributional equity of economic and social opportunities. This requires positive governmental actions and leadership, including an emphasis on the sharing of economic and social opportunities.

If a generalized fear of globalization is false alarm, an unreasoned conviction in favour of less governance is a source of real danger. The simple diagnostic slogan that India's problems stem from over-governance is a dangerous half-truth that can wound, on the one hand, while it tries to salvage, on the other.

Need for a Comprehensive Scrutiny

Our political debates on economic policies have sometimes suffered in the past from being indiscriminating. The lack of discrimination can be seen in both directions, though coming from different quarters:

- (1) the denial of the truth in the half-truth regarding government over-activity, and
- (2) taking that half-truth to be the full truth, neglecting governmental under-activity in many spheres.

The denial of the truth in the half-truth of governmental over-interference has often taken the form of a spirited defence of established arrangements, amounting to justification of counter productive controls and inefficient bureaucracy. This is sometimes done in the name of socialism, even when the over-activity of the government has mainly served the interests not of the toiling masses, but of selected businessmen whose vested interests have been protected. I am reminded of a remark

by Michael Kalecki, a great socialist economist who returned to Poland with much enthusiasm after the communist government took over at the end of the Second World War. After a few decades Kalecki was asked whether the transition from capitalism to socialism was completed in Poland “Yes,” replied Michael Kalecki, “we have successfully abolished capitalism, and now all that needs to be done is to abolish feudalism.”

The truth in the half-truth is worth asserting, since over-control, inefficiency, bureaucracy and vested interests receive too much defence as a result of being confounded with the interest of the poor and the deprived, even though the latter gain little and lose a great deal from the protection of vested privilege and from the championing of misdirected control. There is a real need, particularly for socialists, to scrutinize the nature of the ultimate ends as well as the choice of means to promote those ends.

On the other side, what the half-truth neglects is also worth bringing out very clearly. The indifference to social opportunities has been simply monumental in Indian public policy, including the negligence related to basic education, elementary health care, land reforms, as well as micro-credit and those parts of infrastructure that can particularly favour smaller enterprises. The neglect is not only responsible for many of the failures of the past, but it also makes India more vulnerable to the negative effects of economic globalization and renders her less equipped to reap the positive benefits of the globalizing process.

China and India

The contrast between India and China is quite relevant to both these issues. India has some institutional advantages over China—primarily related to our democratic system and a relatively free press. I shall discuss these issues presently. It is, however, important to note that while China has lost something substantial in the absence of a multi-party democracy and a free

press, it has gained enormously from the political commitment of its leadership in two distinct respects.

First, in the post-reform period, with the economic policy changes of 1979 onwards, China has been able to make excellent use of international markets and economic globalization, and also the use of market-based economic expansion within the economy. To be sure, China has not attempted wholesale privatization of the kind that Russia tried in its own reforms, and China has as a result avoided the problems created by the abolition of an older system without a simultaneous development of new institutions and business behaviour. But China has decisively and rapidly opened up its economy, curtailed the industrial dictatorship of bureaucracy and the hold of misdirected controls, and is reaping the benefits of incentive-related market dynamism. Indeed, the pragmatism of socialist thinking in China contrasts favourably with the inflexibility and orthodoxy of the corresponding thinking in India.

Even Kerala, which gets such high marks in the development of education, health care, etc. (as was discussed earlier) has often been less than welcoming to commerce and business, and less willing to seek Chinese-style economic expansion. Indeed, the expansion of domestic production has been relatively undistinguished in Kerala despite its social preparedness, and the population of the state has often found better economic opportunities for the use of its talents and education outside the state—often outside India—than in Kerala itself. It is, in this context, rather remarkable that according to a World Bank Report published earlier this year, despite Kerala's moderate record in the growth of domestic products, Kerala has still had a faster rate of reduction in income poverty than any other state in India, and this is a further tribute to the rewards that are produced by the expansion of shared social opportunities.⁶ But Kerala could have capitalized more on social assets by being more supportive of economic incentives, as China has done. China, it would appear,

has seized the truth in the half-truth regarding governmental over-activity with some flair.

Second, already in the pre-reform period, China made major strides in enhancing and sharing basic social opportunities related to elementary education, primary health care, land reforms, and so on. This led to significant achievements in raising the quality of life of the masses, including a radical expansion of life expectancy, literacy, and other elementary features of good living. And furthermore, when the economic reforms came in 1979, China was well-prepared—much better prepared than India is today—to have widely shared economic expansion and to make use of opportunities of globalization.

By the time the economic reforms were being put into practice at the very beginning of the 1980s, literacy rates in China were already as high as 96 per cent for males in the 15–19 age group, and 85 per cent even for females in that age group. This made a widely shared economic expansion possible in China in a way it would not have been in India then—and is very difficult in India even now, for reasons I have already discussed. Similarly, a much more extensive base of health care across the country helped China to have workers with less troubled health problems, and this supplemented the positive contribution of shared educational arrangements on participatory economic expansion. The completed land reforms—though initially much more radical than simple reforms—also provided a potential for egalitarian land ownership in Chinese agriculture. When the “responsibility system” was introduced in China in the post-reform period, all they had to do was to replace collective titles by individual rights, without having to deal with land lords, their legal rights and extra-legal subterfuges—plentifully present in India.

It is interesting that post-reform China benefited so much from the achievements of its pre-reform period. Indeed, as the accomplishments of fast economic progress of east Asian economies get more fully analyzed (despite

its present financial problems), it is quite clear that it is not only the openness of the economies—and greater reliance on domestic and international trade—that led to such rapid economic transition in these economies. The groundwork was laid in South Korea, Taiwan and elsewhere in east Asia, by positive social changes, such as land reforms, the spread of education and literacy, better health care. These are not so much the social consequences of economic reforms, but the economic consequences of social reforms. The market economy flourishes on the foundations of social development—a lesson which India has yet to learn.

The main thrust of social changes of this type occurred in China in the pre-reform period before 1979—indeed a lot if it during the active days of Maoist policy. Mao was not, clearly trying to build the social foundations of a market-based economic expansion, and yet his emphasis on widely expanded education, health care and land reforms did just that.

Adam Smith would no doubt have seen this as a good example of his favourite thesis of the unintended consequences of human action, but the Chinese reformers do owe a debt of gratitude to pre-reform policies. Indeed, the extent to which post-reform China draws on the results achieved in pre-reform China needs greater recognition than it tends to get.⁷ The “magic” of China’s contemporary market-based economic success rests on the solid foundation of social changes that had occurred earlier, and India cannot simply hope for that magic, without making the enabling social changes—in education, health care, land reforms, etc.—that help make the market function in the way it has in China. What the half-truth hides is precisely what China has excellently used in its pragmatic combination of market incentives with widely shared social opportunities.

Adam Smith’s Insights

There are, thus, lessons in the Chinese economic performance not only for those who deny the truth, but also for those who take the half-truth to be the full truth.

Those who see no role of the state in market-based economic expansion often reveal great faith in the working of what Adam Smith had called the 'invisible hand.' To quote Smith, people would be led "by an invisible hand," to "advance the interest of society," and this they would achieve "without intending it, without knowing it." As the thesis of the invisible hand is interpreted in contemporary discussions, it is often assumed that it was being claimed by Adam Smith that if there is a need for something, it would result automatically from the market process itself, and thus there is no necessity of public intervention.

This expectation, which does not in fact correspond to what Smith really said, is in any case hard to justify in either empirical term or in terms of theory. As empirical regularities go, the state has typically played a major role in the expansion of basic education across the world. The rapid spread of literacy in the past history of the rich countries of today has been, to a great extent, the result of state initiative. This applies as much to the history of Europe and North America as it does to the history of Japan and the more recent experience of east Asia.

On the theoretical side, it is useful to note that the rationale of the market mechanism is geared to private goods (like apples and shirts), rather than to public goods where different persons share their use (like environmental care, epidemiology, and to a considerable extent, basic education and health care). For example, given the shared communal benefits of basic education, which may transcend the gains of the person being educated, basic education may have a strong public-goods component as well. The persons receiving education do, of course, benefit from it, but in addition a general expansion of education and literacy in a region can facilitate economic expansion and social change. In such cases, as Paul Samuelson pointed out many years ago, there tends to be a good case for public provisioning, going beyond what the private markets would foster.⁸

It is in this context rather remarkable that some market enthusiast recommend now to the developing countries that they should rely fully on the free market even for basic education—thereby withholding from them the very process of educational expansion that was crucial in the past in rapidly spreading literacy in Europe, North America, Japan and east Asia. The alleged followers of Adam Smith can learn something from his own writings on this subject, which included a strong defence of public responsibility in basic education. In fact, Smith gave educational expansion a major role in bringing about economic development and social progress.

Indeed, Adam Smith's belief in the power of education and learning was peculiarly strong. Regarding the debate that continues today on the respective roles of "nature" and "nurture," Smith was an uncompromising "nurturist," and this fitted in with his massive confidence in the improvability of human capabilities:

The difference of natural talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions, when grown up to maturity, is not upon many occasions so much the cause, as the effect of division of labour. The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education. When they come into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were, perhaps, very much alike, and neither their parents nor play-fellows could perceive any remarkable difference.⁹

It is not my purpose there to examine whether Smith's extreme "nurturist" views are right, but his analysis of the role of education leaves little doubt about the central importance he attached to the expansion of basic



Need for public expenditure in the field of education

education as a crucial social opportunity for human betterment and for economic and social development.

Adam Smith was actually quite impatient with the neglect of education in public policy that he saw he around him. He expressed great frustration at the parsimony of public expenditure in the field of education:

For a very small expense the public can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education.¹⁰

The pioneer of market economics had no difficulty in seeing the role of public expenditure in promoting basic education, or in acknowledging the contribution of basic education in making a major difference to economic and social progress. He would have seen the half-truth we have been examining as nothing more than that.

Constitutive and Instrumental Roles of Democracies

The economic prospects of India will turn a great deal on our ability to address the issue of persistent disparities and inequality. This is important on its own, and it is also significant in assessing the likely effects of economic globalization. How does this question relate to the relevance of democracy in assessing India's prospects?

It has been argued recently that democracy may be a barrier to economic growth and development. There is a well-known thesis—repeated often—that goes under the name of the “Lee thesis” (after Lee Kuan Yew, the ex-Prime Minister of Singapore) which precisely asserts such a negative connection. This seems particularly discouraging for the one thing for which India tends to get fairly widespread appreciation—even admiration—and the question has been asked as to whether India might be paying a heavy price for the “luxury” of democracy.

The Lee thesis calls for careful scrutiny, but before I turn to that, I would like to note briefly that the importance of democracy does not lie only in—or even primarily in—its role in facilitating economic

development. It has intrinsic importance in allowing political freedom and participatory roles in citizens, and the practice of democracy has a constitutive function in identifying social needs and public priorities. I shall come back to this question presently.

Democracy and Economic Growth

What about the instrumental role of democracy, and in particular, what about the Lee thesis? That thesis is, in fact, founded on extremely casual empiricism, based primarily on the success of less-than-democratic regimes of east Asia in promoting fast economic growth. We cannot, however, take the high economic growth of South Korea or post-reform China as a definite proof that authoritarianism does better in promoting economic growth any more than we can draw the opposite conclusion on the basis of the fact that the fastest growing African country (and one of the fastest growers in the world), viz. Botswana, has been a oasis of democracy in that unhappy continent. More extensive studies of inter-country comparison has not established any such negative relations. In fact, it appears that on balance, the hypothesis that there is no relation between them in either direction is hard to reject.¹¹ Since democracy and political liberty have importance of their own, the case for them remains untarnished by statistical correlations.

It is also important, in this context, to consider a more basic issue of research methodology. A convincing analysis of the interconnections cannot rely only on statistical connections, but must also examine and scrutinize the casual processes that are involved in economic growth and development. The economic policies and circumstances that led to the economic success of east Asian economies are by now reasonably well understood. Even though different empirical studies have varied somewhat in relative emphasis, there is by now a fairly agreed general list of "helpful policies" which includes openness to competition, the use of international markets, a high level of literacy and school education, successful land reforms, and public provision of incentives

for investment, exporting and industrialization. There is nothing whatsoever to indicate that any of these policies is inconsistent with greater democracy and actually had to be sustained by the elements of authoritarianism that happened to be present in South Korea or post-reform China.¹²

It is, furthermore, not adequate to look only at the growth of GNP to assess economic development. We have to look also at the impact of democracy and political rights on the lives and capabilities of the citizens. It is particularly important in this context to examine the connection between political and civil rights, on the one hand, and the prevention of major disasters (such as famines), on the other. India has certainly benefited from the protective role of democracy in giving the rulers excellent political incentive to act supportively when disasters threaten and when an immediate change in policy is imperative.

India has successfully avoided famines since Independence, while China experienced a massive famine during the failure of the Great Leap Forward when faulty policies were not revised for three years while famine mortality took 23 to 30 million lives. Mrs. Gandhi's brief attempt at suppressing basic political and civil rights (and initiating such coercive policies as compulsory sterilization) in the 1970s was firmly rejected by the voters, thereby electorally ending that government. Even today India is in a better position than China both to prevent abuse of coercive power and to make quicker emendations if and when policies go badly wrong.

Democracy gives an opportunity to the opposition to press for policy change even when the problem is chronic rather than acute and disastrous. So the weakness of Indian social policies on education, health care, land reforms and gender equity is as much a failure of the opposition parties as of the governments in office. Commitments of political leaders of other countries have often achieved more in these fields than the working of Indian democracy. The educational and health achievements of Maoist China, discussed earlier,

illustrate this well. Only in some parts of India have these issues been adequately politicized. The state of Kerala is perhaps the clearest example, where the need for universal education, basic health care, elementary gender equity and land reforms has received effective political backing. The explanation involved both history and contemporary development.¹³

Democracy is not, in fact, a system of automatic dispatch—like taking an anti-polio vaccine. It is an opportunity that people have, which they can use and utilize in different ways. India's prospects will depend greatly on the use that are made of democracy. When we ask: "What are the prospects for India?", answering the question cannot be just an exercise of inert prognostication, it must involve, as was argued earlier, practical reason and policy direction. If the foregoing analysis is correct, nothing perhaps is as important at this time as the adequate politicization of the issue of persistent disparities. Even the process of globalization, from which India cannot opt out, can be either a blessing or a threat—depending on how the challenges of disparities are tackled. Given the democratic form of Indian governance, much would depend on what issues are forced into political attention, and this is an exercise in which the functioning of the opposition is almost as important as the nature of the government.

The limiting features of political practice in India are a source of some concern right at this time, particularly because of the dominance of petty issues, and the lack of an adequate engagement with the major challenge of social and economic disparities. The divisive nature of some of the community-oriented politics can itself be a significant hindrance to concentrating on the general inequalities related to class, gender and region. When the community-orientation is not even related to the grievances of an underdog caste or class, but to grumbles of some influential members of the majority community (such as the demand for building a temple to Rama on the site of the Babri Masjid), the prospects of addressing

the general issues of inequity and privation are inescapably harmed.

Even the heated debates on the pros and cons of liberalization can be, beyond a point, counterproductive, both because the need for economic reforms, in some form, is inescapable given the cheerless history of the over-controlled Indian economy, and also because the results would crucially depend on what else goes with liberalization. The same applies to globalization, which is hard to escape anyway (given the nature of contemporary technology and world trade), and what has to be addressed is the task of making globalization an asset rather than a liability. As I have tried to argue, this issue too depends crucially on our ability to encounter the problem of social and economic disparities. Much will depend on what form the democratic practice of India takes.

Democracy, Constitutive Role and Cultural Dilemmas

I turn now to the postponed issue of the constitutive, as opposed to instrumental, role of democracy. The conceptualization—including comprehension—of “needs” and “priorities” may itself require the active exercise of political and civil rights. It can be argued that a proper understanding of needs and their force—required discussion and exchange. Political and civil rights, especially those related to the guaranteeing of open discussion, debate, criticism, dissent and voting are central to the process of generating informed and reflected choices. These processes are crucial to the formation and legitimacy of political values and of ideas of social urgency.

In fact, even the divisive issue of cultural globalization ultimately calls for a democratic resolution. The threat to the independence of local cultures in the globalizing world of today is, to a considerable extent, inescapable. Can this issue be dealt with in much the same manner as the problems of economic globalization? I believe not; there is a major difference which makes the cultural issue much more complex. When an economic adjustment takes

place, few tears are shed for the superseded methods of production. If employments and incomes are preserved, the change need not be regretted because of the loss of old—and discarded—technology. There may be some nostalgia for specialized and elegant objects (such as an ancient steam engine or an old fashioned clock), but in general old and jettisoned machinery and production methods are not particularly wanted. In the case of culture, however, lost traditions may be greatly missed. The demise of old ways of living can cause anguish, and a deep sense of loss. It is a little like the extinction of older species of animals. The elimination of old species in favour of “fitter species that are “better” able to cope and multiply can be a source of regret, and the fact that the new species are “better” in the Darwinian system of comparison need not be seen as a consolation enough.¹⁴

This is an issue of some seriousness, but it is up to the society to determine what, if anything, it wants to do to preserve old forms of living, even at significant economic cost. Ways of life can be preserved if the society decides to do just that, and it is a question of balancing the costs of such preservation in comparison with the value that the society attached to the objects and the life styles preserved. There is, of course, no ready formula for this type of decision (and no blue print for cost-benefit analysis), but what is crucial for the rational assessment of such choices is the ability of the people to participate in public discussion on this subject.

While there is some danger in ignoring uniqueness of cultures, there is also the possibility of being deceived by the presumption of ubiquitous insularity. The culturally fearful often take a very fragile view of each culture and tend to underestimate our ability to learn from elsewhere without being overwhelmed by that experience. Indeed, the rhetoric of “national tradition” can help to hide the history of outside influences on the different traditions. For example, *chilli* may be a central part of Indian cooking as we understand it (some even

see it as something of a “signature tune” of Indian cooking), but it is also a fact that chilli was unknown in India until the Portuguese brought it here only a few centuries ago. Today’s Indian curries are no less “Indian” for this reason.

Nor is there anything particularly shady in the fact that—given the blustering popularity of Indian food in contemporary Britain—the British Tourist Board describes curry as authentic ‘British fare’. A couple of summers ago I even encountered in London a marvellous description of a person’s incurable ‘Englishness’: he was, we were informed, “as English as daffodils or chicken tikka masala.”

The image of regional self-sufficiency in cultural matters is deeply misleading, and the value of keeping traditions pure and unpolluted is hard to sustain. This is not an argument against the importance of uniqueness of each culture, but rather a plea for some sophistication in understanding cross-cultural influences, taking into account our basic ability to enjoy products of other cultures and other lands. This is a subject for debate and discussion and decision; what is to be avoided is to let the cultural issue be hijacked either by unreasoning conservationists, or by those who have no interest in Indian culture anyway.

The central issue is participatory decision. The different sections of the society (and not just the socially privileged) should be able to be active in the decision regarding what to preserve and what to let go. There is no compulsion to preserve every departing life style even at heavy cost, but there is a real need for people to be able to take part in these social decisions, if they so choose.¹⁵ This gives further reason for attaching importance to such elementary capabilities as reading and writing (through basic education), being well-informed and well briefed (through a free media), and have realistic chances of participating freely (through elections, referendums and the general use of civil rights). This is part of constitutive role of a practising democracy, and India cannot dispense with this vital need.

Constitutive Functions and Social Values

The reach and effectiveness of open dialogue can be very effective also in assessing social and political problems (not just cultural issues). To consider a much analyzed subject, viz. high rates of fertility in most developing countries, public discussion has an important role to play in reducing fertility rates. There is, in fact, much evidence that the sharp decline in fertility rates that has taken place in the more literate states in India has been crucially influenced by public discussion of the bad effect of high fertility rates especially on the lives of young women, and also for the community at large. If the view has emerged in, say, Kerala or Tamil Nadu that a happy family in the contemporary world is a small family, much discussion and debating have gone into the formation of these perspectives.¹⁶ Kerala now has a fertility rate of 1.7 (similar to that in Britain and France, and well below China's 1.9 and the USA's 2.0), and this has been achieved with no coercion, but mainly through the emergence of new values—a process in which political and social dialogues have played a major part. The high level of literacy of the Kerala population, especially female literacy, which is higher than that of every province of China, has greatly contributed to making informed social and political dialogues possible.

In the exercise of value formation, young women can play a very vital part. It is the life of the young woman that is most battered by continuous bearing and rearing of babies, and it is not surprising that the social changes that give women a greater voice and authority within the family have the biggest impact on reducing fertility rates. In a comparative study of nearly 300 districts within India (done by Mamta Murthi, Anne-Catherine Guio and Jean Dreze), it emerges that women's education and women's employment are the two most important influences in reducing fertility rates.¹⁷ The developments that help the emancipation of women (including women's literacy and women's employment) seem to make a major difference to fertility rate.

Democracy and Dialogue

What is also interesting to note in this context is the juxtaposition of this very strong statistical finding at the inter-district level, with some disputing observations that have been presented recently, suggesting a rather weak connection between the same variables in inter-household comparisons.¹⁸ Even though the latter set of studies is based on rather small samples, there is an interesting suggestion here that the enhancement of education or employment of women in isolated household does not have anything like the impact that can be seen when a whole region advances in that direction. The contrast we are observing here is that of inter-active relations—the impact of social change which alters dialogues and discussions over groups rather than in isolated families.

There is a similar issue in the contrast between and observed positive connection between the schooling of female children and outside work of adult women at the inter-district level, even though this does not seem to replicate at the inter-household level.¹⁹ Social interactions and dialogues can make a difference. These connections link closely with the dialogic role of democracies, and the formation of social values through hermeneutical process

Indeed, even the identification of “needs” depend to a great extent on public discussion and shared perceptions. Deprivation can be of various kinds—some more amenable to social remedying than others. The totality of the human predicament would be a gross basis for identifying our “needs.” For example, there are many things that we might have good reason to value if they were feasible—we could even want immortality (it sounds like a good idea). But we don’t see them as “needs.” Our conception of needs relates to our ideas of preventable nature of particular deprivation, and to our understanding of what can be done about them. In the formation of these understanding and beliefs, public discussions play a crucial role. Political rights, including

freedom of expression and discussion, are not only pivotal in inducing political responses to social and economic needs, they are also central to the conceptualization of social and economic needs themselves.

It is, for these reasons, unfair to judge democracy by its purely instrumental role. There is more to democracy. First, democratic freedom is part of our overall freedom, and it is directly valuable for that reasons. Second, democratic interaction and confrontation are part of the process of need formation and the emergence of social values, and they have a constitutive role to play in the valuational exercises that are central to rational social decisions. Despite the relatively modest nature of the success of Indian democracy judged wholly within the instrumental perspective, there is a wider perspective to be considered in taking note of the constitutive role of democracy. Indeed, democratic politics is one of the great assets we have.

A Concluding Remark

We can get more out of our democracy by working for the politicization of central issues of governance, including the need to address more fully India's extraordinary problems of internal disparity. I have presented arguments to indicate the critical importance of this issue judged on its own as well as in the perspective of the challenges of economic globalization. There are few things as important as bringing the penalties of disparity into the centre of the political arena.

The road ahead for India will depend much on the integration of these different concerns: preservation of democracy, rapid social progress (particularly in education, health care, land reforms and gender equity), and further economic changes (consolidating the scope for competition, incentives and openness, while enhancing social and economic evenhandedness). India has suffered in the last half a century from ignoring the need for such integration, and the tendency to neglect social development, in particular, has very far-reaching

consequences. Since changes in a democracy like India have to take place through public discussion and debate, the first step is to see the need for taking an integrated view of economic, social and political progress. What Nehru called, fifty years ago, on the eve of Independence, “the great triumphs and achievements that await us” will continue to wait unless this basic interdependence is more forcefully seized. India’s prospects depend on it. □

Notes

1 On this see my “Our Culture, Their Culture,” *The New Republic*, April 1, 1996, and “Culture and Development Global Perspectives and Constructive Scepticism,” mimeographed, UNESCO, 1997

2 On this and related failures of governance, see Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India. Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995), and Dreze and Sen, eds, *Indian Development Selected Regional Perspectives* (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1996)

3 See Nevin Scrimshaw, “The Lasting Damage of Early Malnutrition,” World Food Programme, 1997; see also Peter Svedberg, *Poverty and Undernutrition: Theory and Measurement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, forthcoming).

4 On the last, see my “Missing Women,” *British Medical Journal*, 1993. The overall picture of gender inequality in India is discussed in Dreze and Sen, *India. Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (1995)

5 Oxford University Press, 1995; see also our jointly edited *Indian Development Selected Regional Perspective* (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1996)

6 See World Bank, *India Achievements and Challenges in Reducing Poverty*, Report No 16483-IN, May 27, 1997 (see particularly Figure 2.3), also see G. Datt, *Poverty in India and Indian States. An Update* (Washington, D.C. International Food Policy Research Institute, 1997)

7. On this see Dreze and Sen, *India Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (1995), Chapter 5

8 The recent literature on this subject is well reviewed and scrutinized in Andreas Papandreou, *Externality and Institutions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

9. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), I ii, in the edition by R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 28–9.

10 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776, republished, ed , R.H. Campbell and A.S Skinner, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, I.ii(p.27), and V i f. (p 785)

11. See particularly Adam Przeworski *et al*, *Sustainable Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Robert J Barro, *Getting It Right: Markets and Choices in a Free Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996)

12 On this see my joint study with Jean Dreze, *Hunger and Public Action* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Part III

13 On this see V K Ramachandra, "On Kerala's Development Achievements," in Dreze and Sen, eds , *Indian Development Selected Regional Perspectives* (1996)

14. For a critique of the Darwinian concept of progress, see my "On the Darwinian View of Progress," *London Review of Books*, 14 (November 5, 1992), republished in *Population and Development Review*, 1993.

15 If the crusty old guard is offended at the popularity of M.T.V , or of Kentucky Fried Chicken, even after people have had a chance of considering the choices and have decided to accept the new options, there is not much comfort we can offer to the resisters (of which I am probably one) But the opportunity of examination and participation is quite a central right that each citizen should have

16 On this and related issues, see also Robin Jeffrey, "Culture and Governments How Women Made Kerala Literate," *Pacific Affairs*, 60 (1987), and *Politics, Women and Well-being How Kerala Became "A Model"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

17 See Matma Murthi, Anne-Catherine Guio, and Jean Dreze "Mortality, Fertility, and Gender Bias in India," *Population and Development Review*, 21 (December 1995) See also Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, eds., *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996)

18 See particularly the collection of studies edited by Roger Jeffery and Alka Malwade Basu, *Girls' Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage, 1997)

19 On this see Jean Dreze, "Gender and Employment: Introduction," *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, December 1997, and the Studies cited there □

Annual Distinguished Lecture of the Social Development and Community Affairs Council of the Confederation of Indian Industry, given by Amartya Sen at New Delhi on 29 December 1997

THE LAW AND THE CONSTITUTION

L M Singhvi

India has had its own highly developed ancient and mediaeval legal systems. Indigenous Indian ideas of republicanism, democracy and rule of law go back to the dawn of human history. The legal system in contemporary India as we know it, however, owes much to the reception and impact of British legal ideas and institutions. Ancient legal and constitutional concepts were absorbed or overtaken during the last two millenia by challenges of history, geo-politics, conquests and resistance as well as by a process of adjustment, innovation and assimilation. It is remarkable that the Indian society took to British legal idea and institutions steadily, enthusiastically, confidently, and creatively.

The Indian legal system is perhaps the world's most successful trans-cultural transplant mainly because of the eclectic, hospitable and synthesising genius of India and the role India's new elites played in the socialization and rationalization of public administration, administration of justice and the democratization of political discourse. India had, when it became independent in 1947, a sophisticated legal system, a well organized civil service, professionally trained and politically neutral defence forces, an independent judiciary and an independent legal profession with a strong sense of tradition and continuity, an articulate press and a highly developed sense of parliamentary politics and its institutions.

When India embarked on its tryst with destiny, it began to build its edifice of republican governance on the foundations of the values adopted and consecrated during its freedom struggles and the structures, which were evolved and negotiated through the mediation of the British rulers. Both the values and structures of governance were borrowed liberally from the British experience and were broadened by an eclectic approach. Gandhiji, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, Dr. Ambedkar, Babu Jagjiwan Ram and other leaders among the founding fathers of the Constitution, as well as their precursors and contemporaries, who led the battle for freedom and human dignity in India, fought both with the weaponry of non-violence and civil disobedience as well as the idea and values with which the colonial rulers were familiar in their own country. The logic of democracy and rule of law as well as the contradictions of colonialism became self-evident in India's struggle for freedom just as they did in the American War of Independence. If, however, the United States of America won their independence in a different way and in a shorter span than India, there were political, historical and sociological reasons to account for the difference.

The legal and constitutional systems of England, Scotland, USA, Canada, Australia and India as well as other countries of the Commonwealth bear many striking resemblances because of considerable interaction among them, and because legal and political ideas in these countries were frequently exchanged through the English language. Judicial precedents and legislative enactments in one or more of those countries were often referred to and consulted, and occasionally adapted and followed. The legal system introduced in India by the British was, of course, meant to serve the Raj but it was an element in the orderly growth of institutions of governance which acquired a momentum of their own as institutions invariably do.

In a characteristic vein, Bernard Shaw wrote in *The Man of Destiny*:

There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishman doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles.

Let it be said by way of a footnote to Bernard Shaw's caustic comment that Englishmen, Scots and the Welsh who ruled India and who fought and robbed and colonized, also brought legal ideas, principles and institutions into the framework and process of governance. No doubt in many ways the East was East and the West was West, but the twain did meet in the Indian legal and judicial system.

When India became independent in 1947, the administrative and legal system remained essentially as it was during the Raj. The 1935 Act and the Independence of India Act, 1947 provided the transitional framework. The Government of India Act, 1935 provided an inherited and familiar structural basis for the Draft Constitution, which 'We the People' finally adopted, enacted and gave unto ourselves on November 26, 1949. The Constitution as a whole came into force on January 26, 1950.

The adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly on behalf of the People of India was indisputably the greatest benchmark in the history of independent India. It is that Constitution which has been the foundation of democracy and rule of law in India; it is that Constitution which has helped us to surmount problems and overcome crises and to resolve or cope with some of the most difficult situations in the history of the nation.

The Constitution of India provides an organic framework of values, precepts and principles as well as

institutional norms, equations and ethos. It is also the touch-stone for all legislation and administrative action. It regulates Indian federalism. It provides for conflict resolution in many different ways. Above all, it is the fundamental compendium of the rights and obligations of Indian citizenship. In the ultimate analysis, it defines India and envisions its tryst with destiny.

The spirit of the Indian Constitution found an eloquent expression in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's famous speech at midnight when India attained independence. That speech has many evocative passages which give expression to the spirit of freedom as does the Preamble to the Constitution. I quote a few nuggets to illustrate aspects of India's constitutional mindset:

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially... A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity... At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures... The achievements we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?... Freedom and power bring responsibility. That responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India... The service of

India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us but as long as there are tears and sufferings, so long our work will not be over... To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell."

India's quest for freedom was inspired and led by Mahatma Gandhi after he returned from South Africa. His moral vision was based on the principles of truth and non-violence. The still small voice of his conscience became the fighting faith of India. Inter-faith amity and harmony was the warp and woof of Gandhian secularism. The amelioration of the downtrodden, the poor and the underprivileged and the eradication of social disabilities became integral to his vision of *Purna Swaraj* or freedom in its fullness. Gandhiji's famous talisman was the salt of the earth of *Purna Swaraj*. His words giving us his talisman still echo with a unique resonance in the hearts and minds of the People of India. He had said in a soulful message to every Indian and especially those who would operate the levers of power through the law and the Constitution.

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use

to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *Swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.

Equally evocative and inspiring is the fundamental framework of ideas found in the preambular proclamation which prefaced the Indian Constitution when it was adopted and enacted on November 26, 1949. It declared the resolve of the people of India to secure:

Justice, social, economic and political;
Liberty of thought, expression,
Belief, faith and worship; and
Equality of Status and of opportunity,
And to promote among them all
Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual
and the unity and integrity of the Nation.

The goals and the ethos of the Indian Republic as articulated in the Indian Constitution were, in a general sense, derived not only from the aspirations of the freedom struggle of the people of India but also from the three great revolutions, the American, the French and the Russian, from which the leading ideas of the Indian Constitution were drawn. The institutions of governance in India were shaped by those ideas and aspirations and more particularly by India's own constitutional evolution as also by the constitutional experience in the USA, Eire and the countries of the Commonwealth, especially UK, Canada and Australia. Broadly speaking, the American Constitution and Universal Declaration of Human Rights influenced the chapter on Fundamental Rights and judicial review, the Republic of Ireland gave us a model for the Directive Principles of State Policy; and the Canadian and the Australian constitutions gave us the material for our federal framework and freedom of interstate commerce. Most importantly it was the Government

of India Act (1935) and the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy which provided the basic structural input for India's constitutional blueprint.

Fifty years of India's Independence have demonstrated India's remarkable commitment to Democracy and Rule of Law despite heavy odds, which have proved insurmountable in many other countries which attained freedom after the second World War. The Constitution of India has been the main anchor of safety for democracy in the harbour of Rule of Law.

During the first thirty five years or so, India's large middle class sustained the values of democracy and Rule of Law which fashioned the ideology of constitutionalism. During the last two decades or so, the backward classes, the minorities as well as the scheduled castes and tribes sought and found a new presence for themselves in the power structure through electoral and political pulls and pressures, which have often appeared to be divisive, but which have also helped in their own way to broaden the democratic base of Indian political system.

Universal adult franchise and the strength of the legal and judicial system reinforced by the Constitution at every step in the life of the nation have given Indian democracy an openness and resilience all its own. We may have a hundred flaws and fault lines in the working of India's constitutional system but there are certain positive characteristics of our constitutional culture which unmistakably contribute to the vitality of the system. A free press in an open society, a reasonably credible electoral system, an independent legal profession, a pro-active independent judiciary, a sense of unity in diversity, a national attitude of tolerance, a national commitment to secularism, a high quality of human resources and a growing sense of self-confidence have kept the Indian nation together and on the move.

At the seedtime of India's republic, there were many strands of ideologies which laid their claims on the minds of men and women who were deliberating on the making

of the Constitution, to which the legal system and the social customs and mores of Indian Society would have to conform once the Constitution was promulgated. Socialism was the main contender among those ideologies. Strangely, Gandhian ideas remained in the background even though Gandhiji's personality and idea of *Gram Swaraj* had dominated the Indian National Congress and the minds of many of the members of the Constituent Assembly. The provision for village *Panchayats* to be organized at some future date was belatedly and somewhat apologetically incorporated in Article 40 as a Directive Principle of State Policy, which were meant to be declared to be fundamental but were not enforceable. There was no time span stipulated for their implementation. On the other hand, the Directive Principles of State Policy embodied in Part IV of the Constitution do have their roots distinctively in Nehruvian socialism and in the conviction that benign State Socialism was the answer to India's chronic poverty as well as social disparities, exploitation and privation. Mahatma Gandhi's famous talisman was translated in many of the constitutional provisions cast in the Nehruvian mould, but not his dream of *Gram Swaraj*. It was only when Part IX and IX-A were enacted and incorporated into the Constitution (and I had the privilege of drafting in substance the constitutional provisions which now form Part IX relating to *Panchayati Raj* which is extended to urban self-government in Part IX-A of the Constitution) in 1992 by the 73rd Amendment when we finally gave constitutional status to the third tier of our self-government.

The ideology of the Indian Constitution was formed by a liberal human rights outlook rooted in our freedom struggle. It was not the ideology of capitalism or communism, although certain 'socialist' ideological positions did find a more elaborate and articulate expression and a more prominent place in the Directive Principles of State Policy than did Gandhian ideas of

Sarvodaya, Antyodaya, Gram Swaraj and Panchayati Raj. In the ultimate analysis, the resonance of the Indian Constitution is to be found in the ideology of constitutionalism rooted in human rights jurisprudence, which permeates the legal system and the political dynamics of India.

Looking back, we might say that the Constitution opted principally for the ideology of constitutionalism reflected in its democratic liberalism, rule of law, a version of federalism and parliamentary democracy. Other ideological hues and colours were also scattered on the Indian constitutional canvas but those were meant only to emphasize instrumental ways and means to secure and protect the goal of the welfare of the people and a social order in which justice—social, economic and political—shall inform all the institutions of the national life. It is the ideological matrix of constitutionalism which has become India's badge of identity. It is an ideology of stability and change based on a holistic humanistic worldview of expanding human freedom and dignity and providing the institutional ethos of the progressive transformation of the society. It is remarkable that Indian constitutionalism has proved its tensile strength even though economic progress has been slow and the emancipation of downtrodden and the underprivileged from abject poverty and oppressive privation has yet to be achieved.

Ideologically and institutionally, Indian constitutionalism provides a set of criteria to conform to in order to ensure the validity of all State action—legislative, executive and judicial. It puts in place a hierarchy in each branch of government. It lays down a system of distribution of powers and a system of accountability, a system of rights and obligations, and a system of conflict resolution between citizen and citizen, citizen and State and State and its instrumentalities *inter se* as well as between different branches of government. It accommodates cultural, religious, linguistic and other

diversities within the framework of India's integrity and national unity. The Indian Constitution abhors the strait jacket of theocracy but Indian secularism is not anti-religious *Dharma* or sense of ethics and duty is what defines India's heritage which connotes a sense of equal respect for all religions. That is the constitutional and cultural essence of Indian secularism. Different economic, political and cultural ideologies can compete for popular mandate and legislative approval within the constitutional framework, but subject always to the constitutional condition that they cannot violate the constitutional precepts, prescriptions and injunctions. Within the orbit of those precepts, prescriptions and injunctions, there is a very large area of choices.

To give an accurate and exhaustive enumeration of the factors which have played the most crucial role in sustaining 'Constitutionalism' in India is difficult. For the contours of constitutionalism, and its strength and weaknesses are constantly changing. Suffice it to say that constitutionalism has taken roots in the soil of India but it is constantly embattled by the revolution of rising expectations, popular impatience, a sense of disillusionment and the inroads made by those wielding authority. We are also forcefully reminded that constitutionalism will not be protected merely by courts and legislatures, or by the political executive and the bureaucracy; it is in the hearts and minds of men, women and children that durable defences of constitutionalism have to be built.

A broadbased review and audit of the Constitution and the Laws of India shows that in many ways the country has been held together by the constitutional and legal system. It also shows that effective, efficient, dynamic and corruption-free governance has become increasingly difficult, parliamentary institutions have developed a creeping incoherence, the legal system suffers from an inbuilt inertia and the judicial process extremely slow and cumbersome. It is my view that the time has come

for a comprehensive review and reform based on the experience gained during the last fifty years, particularly to make India a more governable and a more politically stable country.

There is a widely held view that political parties, politicians and the bureaucracy have failed the system, that corruption has corroded the credibility of the system and that there is a nexus between political and administrative corruption on the one hand and criminal elements on the other. All-India political parties no longer hold the sway. Regional parties and pressures which contribute to coalition politics tend to make excessive demands on the system. Regional populism is on the rise. Political discipline is at a discount. The fractured verdicts have not produced a reasonable degree of stability necessary for economic development and for the amelioration of the sub-human condition of those below the poverty line. Constitutional changes may not offer a panacea for all our ills, but they might facilitate a more purposeful approach in our national life. □

ICCR JOURNALS

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50TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUES

The Council has brought out following special issues of the Journals to commemorate the Fiftieth anniversary of India's Independence:

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| (i) <i>Africa Quarterly</i> (English) | Vol. 37, No.1-2, 1997 |
| (ii) <i>Africa Quarterly</i> (English) | Vol. 37, No.3-4, 1997 |
| (iii) <i>Gangananchal</i> (Hindi) | Vol. 20, No 2-3, 1997 |
| (iv) <i>Paples de la India</i> (Spanish) | Vol. 26, No.2, 1997 |
| (v) <i>Paples de la India</i> (Spanish) | Vol 26, No.3-4, 1997 |
| (vi) <i>Rencontre Avec L'Inde</i> (French) | Vol. 26, No.2, 1997 |
| (vii) <i>Indien in der Gegenwart</i> (German) | Vol. 2 , No.1-2, 1997 |

Another Special Issue of the Council's German Quarterly *Indien in der Gegenwart*, Vo.3, No.1-2, 1998 is being brought out to coincide with the end of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of India's Independence.

POLITICAL INDIA

N Ram

India is one of the most politicized societies in the world: this is as true today, half a century after Independence, as it was in 1947. The degradation of democratic institutions and frustration over the failure to solve the problems of mass poverty, socio-economic deprivation and injustice on a gigantic scale, various forms of entrenched backwardness, notably illiteracy, communalism, pervasive corruption and criminalization of politics might have led to cynicism from time to time. This decline and the frustrations surely have something to do with the volatility that has been a defining feature of Indian politics since the mid-1960s. But, fortunately, they have failed to generate a long-term trend of de-politicization. This is evidenced by the relatively high rates of participation of urban as well as rural Indians, men as well as women, in political activity in general and elections in particular.

Sustained politicisation must be recognised as one of the basic strengths of the Indian experience, a function of its democratization over half a century of Independence. People take their political rights and choice seriously. This is an advantage that India has over several countries which are more developed in several respects, more educated at the base level, and far more prosperous. The fact that, for all its weaknesses, the system that took shape in the post-1947 period seems to be endowed with a certain bottomline of institutional sustainability, if not stability, is a double advantage.

Nevertheless, recent political events have underlined the fact that half a century after its Independence, India is passing through a time of painful transition. The question is—to what? This question cannot be answered without reference to the striking range of conflicts and pressures, some of them apparently malignant, which have, over an extended period, pulled against the fabric of nationhood, the social order and political stability. These are, of course, inter-related

To characterise the recent and current socio-political situation as unstable and volatile is to call attention to the obvious. In addition to having to face the implications of a massive denial of socio-economic justice, in a system that is (as the distinguished Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen, implied in his contribution to the special Issue of *Frontline*, August 22, 1997, marking the Golden Jubilee of Independence) *one of the most iniquitous in the world*, India has had to bear the burden of a national agenda of unwanted social, ethnical, communal and caste antagonisms and divisive issues shaped by the 1970s and 1980s. In consequence, these decades saw beneath the appearance of strong governance the decay of a political system and the disestablishment of several democratic institutions.

Can India hold together in the next decade? Can our civil society and social order come out of the woods? Can we count on a reasonable bottomline of political stability and coherence in our system? These inter-related questions define the nature of the challenge when we speak about national integration and political stability, both desirable goals or objectives.

The question of who rules and will rule in Delhi is an important question, but there are more basic questions. The unity of India and the integrity of its democratic, secular institutions have, during the second half of these fifty years of Independence, come under intense pressure from at least four types of socio-political phenomena.

The first is the problem of separatism or secessionism allied with religious fundamentalism or other extremist

ideological and social tendencies and committed to militarized or terrorist methods. This ideologically, socially and politically determined problem has brought civil society in the affected states or areas to its knees. The pressure exerted by this phenomenon has waxed and waned over the five decades, sometimes increasing oppressively in response to political authoritarianism, over-centralization and opportunism.

The second is the phenomenon of politically organized, militant communalism which has been on the march, taking a very high toll and threatening the integrity and basic character of the polity. This phenomenon is expressed in a variety of religious fundamentalist responses, but most menacingly on the national stage by the quite successful building up of the *Hindutva* or *Hindu Rashtra* platform by aggressive Hindu chauvinists, the saffron brigade, since the mid-1980s.

The third is related to the deeply damaging features of, and the pressure and social strife that have built around, the caste system. Although not unchanging, this system, which is bolstered by landlordism and seeped in semi-feudal values and ideas of a most retrograde kind, continues to have a malignant durability. It exemplifies social oppression, inequality and injustice in a way that cannot be escaped. The widespread demand for 'social justice' and the social divisions and strife that seem, at times, to overwhelm the democratic polity arise from this situation. The caste system, which is bolstered by landlordism and seeped in semi-feudal values and ideas of a most retrograde kind, continues to have a malignant durability.

The fourth issue that cannot be escaped relates to the working of 'cooperative federalism', and more specifically Centre-State relations, on which both national unity and political stability depend vitally in a political sense.

If India is to do well in the intermediate future, these challenges have to be responded to in a much more imaginative way than we have witnessed over the past two or three decades.

For most of the fifty years, India has been ruled by one party, the Congress, by virtue first of its leadership role in the freedom struggle and, secondly, because of the absence of coherent alternatives at the all-India level. But that political hegemony, seriously challenged and eroded as early as 1967, came to a decisive end in the late-1980s. We are clearly into a new chapter. The last four general elections (1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998) have underlined the fact that the Indian polity is divided three or even four ways, making a majority government virtually impossible. This feature dictates, for now and the foreseeable future, coalition arrangements involving some common positions and approaches but much discord and expediency.

The National Front government experience (1989–91), dependent as it was on the BJP as well as the Left for survival, proved unsurprisingly short-lived in the face of the BJP's aggressive *Ramjanmabhumi* campaign. The eventful Congress (I) interregnum (1991–96) achieved the conversion of minority into 'working majority'. In turn, this 'successful' experience seemed to offer the saffron brigade the *realpolitik* lesson that nothing needs to be considered a real obstacle if you are close enough to power, if there is no real alternative, if there are opportunist political leaders and groups and grasping Members of Parliament about, if you show the killer instinct. But knowledge of the price Narasimha Rao eventually had to pay, in terms of reputation and legal consequences, for his 'success' might prove to be a deterrent. The experience of the two United Front minority governments (1996–1998), surviving at the pleasure of the Congress (I), did not suggest any kind of stability, even short-term stability, even if some of the political policy measures seemed positive.

But it is the experience of India's 'first genuine non-Congress government', the BJP-led coalition government (which has set a world record for the number of coalition partners), that already presents itself as the model of how not to govern. Under this Rightwing regime, the credibility of the Central government has been eroded in record

time. It seems only a matter of fairly short time before this motley coalition unravels under the weight of its contradictions and the burden of unmatched misgovernance.

The political 'formations' or groupings which may be identified as the national level players today are: the Congress (I) and its allies plus conditional supporters; the BJP and its Maharashtra-based ally, the Shiv Sena, plus an opportunist bag of ideologically disparate allies pulling in different directions and aggressively pursuing regional and paorchial agendas; and the ideologically and politically disparate 'third force' that has suffered both decline and disintegration and which no longer seems capable of bidding seriously for any leadership role at the Centre, and increasingly looks like playing the role of a junior partner to the Congress (I). Any Central government must, of necessity, come from one, or a combination, of these broad 'formations'.

The recent track record suggests that neither the BJP nor the Congress (I) can come within hailing distance of winning a simple majority of the 543 Lok Sabha seats. In the twelfth general election, the BJP won just over 25 per cent of the popular vote, and with its allies just over 37 per cent; the Congress (I) actually scored marginally better than the BJP in vote share but its allies brought in less than 4 per cent of the national popular vote. The parties of the United Front together totalled nearly 22 per cent and others, including independents, about 11 per cent.

Since various developments have indicated that the thirteenth general election cannot be too far away, the real contest ahead will be about emerging as the single largest formation so as to be able to dictate terms for a coalition arrangement at the Centre. This arrangement is likely to be in the default mode. What has brought about this situation? In order to begin to answer this question, we need to examine certain key, long-term trends in Indian politics.

The most important of these trends is the historic decline of the Congress, the party of traditional dominance

in the system, in terms of popular support, vote share and governing skills. This process seems far gone and will be extremely difficult to reverse. There has been a good deal of press commentary and analysis on the theme of the Congress (I)'s decline and fall. From time to time, political commentators have tended to write it off, so that the party can remark, with Mark Twain, that "the report of my death was an exaggeration". While it is nothing without its factionalism and infeuding, a measure of glue extracted from the habit of holding power seems to make it go on against the odds. The returnability of the Congress is a function not of any vision or leadership, but of historical familiarity, of simply being around for a long time in every part of a vast and mixed-up country.

The Congress (I) is still the only party in the system which is truly trans-regional, which has a presence on the ground in every part of the country. Its resilience and capacity to cling to power or to stage comebacks are not to be underestimated. There are certain signs that under the helmswomanship of Sonia Gandhi, it has been able to achieve a kind of organizational and political resurgence, or at least functionality, which places it in a position of relative advantage *vis-a-vis* the 'third force' and enables it to prepare to challenge the BJP for national pre-eminence.

Nevertheless, what stands out is the massive political space the Congress has vacated over the past decade or more. From the time of Independence, popular support for this party has declined by some 15 to 20 percentage points at the all-India level, with the erosion being significantly higher in key states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Tamil Nadu.

Congress leaders and manifestos have traditionally equated their party's rule with the idea of political stability and identified the Opposition with uncertainty and instability. Aside from valuing 'stability' for its own sake, that is, independent of the content it has to offer, such assertions embody merely half the truth. It is the big decline of the party of traditional dominance combined

with the inability of coherent democratic alternatives to occupy the space vacated—on the basis of a minimum programme speaking to real issues—which explains the phenomenon of political instability in India.

The volatility of the Indian electoral arena is well recognised by psephologists, political scientists and serious journalist analysts. Substantial swings over relatively short periods, combining with changes in the split factor, help to overthrow incumbents or, in some instances, to moderate and balance the electoral change.

Without the prevalence of the 'first past the post' system of elections, which entrenches disproportionality and confers undue advantage on those above a certain threshold, the hopes single parties nurse of winning stability outside a coalition framework would be impossible to sustain in most cases.

The actual decline of the Congress system of governance over the long term is much greater than is generally realized. In terms of share of the popular vote, the decline is from a level of 46 per cent (until and excluding 1967) to an average of 42 per cent (from 1967 to 1984) to 39.5 per cent in 1989. The share slipped further to 36.5 per cent in 1991, when a powerful sympathy factor following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi boosted the figure for the second stage of a split contest, to 29.7 per cent in 1996, and just under 26 per cent in 1998.

Another feature of this decline is the plight of the ruling party at the State level: its current position in State Assemblies is very much worse than its position in the Lok Sabha. Of the seven large States, that is, those with more than 35 Lok Sabha seats (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), which make up a total of 350 or nearly two-thirds of the House, the party is in power only in Madhya Pradesh. Its chances of bidding for power in the conceivable future in four of these States—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu—are virtually non-existent. Of the five medium sized States, that is, those with 20 to 30 Lok Sabha seats—Karnataka,

Gujarat, Rajasthan, Kerala and Orissa—the party is in power only in the last. It has suffered an upset in the smaller northern States (Punjab, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir) where it shows few signs of recovery. It is in the small states in the northeastern region that the Congress is in a position of some advantage. However, it seems to be well placed to stage a big comeback in Rajasthan as well as Maharashtra. All this has a major implication for the practice of federalism in India.

The second major trend in the polity has been the relative success of the forces of Hindu fundamentalism, or communalism, in a populous part of the country. It is they, and not the secular alternatives, which have made an aggressive and effective play for the space vacated in these vital arenas of northern and western India by the Congress. In quantitative terms, the defining fact is this: between 1984 and 1991, the BJP as a party climbed, in two steep steps, from a one-fourteenth share to a fifth share of the national popular vote. Now it seems perched at a one-fourth share which may not be stable.

When the VP Singh Government put an end to the *Rath yatra*, the BJP withdrew support to the National Front Government. The break with the BJP helped free the third force" from the idea that the path of its advance lay in collaboration with Hindu communalism. The high performance states for the BJP have been Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and, in alliance with the Shiv Sena, Maharashtra. In all these states of the Hindi heartland and western India, the party of *Hindutva* has been an effective bidder for power. Its most spectacular growth has come in India's most populous state, where its share of the popular vote climbed from less than one-tenth in 1984–85 to one-third in 1991–93 (and over 36 per cent in 1998); and in Gujarat, where it rose from less than one-fifth in the 1984 Lok Sabha contest to over half in 1991 (just under 48 per cent in the 1998 general election). The state where it has achieved the highest growth from a very low base is Karnataka, where it polled 28.8 per cent of the popular vote in the

1991 Lok Sabha election (compared with 2.6 per cent in 1989). The areas of moderate or moderate-plus growth include Orissa (21.43 per cent in 1998) and Bihar (21.30 per cent in 1998).

However, certain factors clearly work against the BJP and its ambitious project of expansionism. The outcome of the twelfth general election brought out both the strengths and weaknesses of the BJP. Overall, the saffron party, the party of the *Hindu* Right, was able to advance and move to Central power on the strength of a five percentage point gain (over 1996) in the popular vote share for the party, and a 12 percentage point gain for the 15-party front.

This meant outward expansion in a vast political space, essentially southward and eastward, and the establishment of new political and organizational beachheads. Some political analysts have spoken of a 'Congressization' of the BJP as it entered a new stage of development (and perhaps decline as a political force). This time the BJP reached out adventurously to make a criss-cross of statewide opportunist alliances that found no parallel in the Congress' track record. But what stood highlighted was the limits of the BJP's growth in the political arena, the party's unimpressive performance in major battlegrounds of traditional strength, and the political costs that came with the new and extensively made gains.

Further, experience teaches that the BJP in government tends to let its mandate erode quicker than the Congress and the regional parties of the United Front, not to mention the Left fronts that are in power in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. There is, in fact, some basis to surmise that a term for the BJP in office approximates half a term. Extremism in course and lacklustre policy-making and administrative performance cause disillusion among the people.

This was certainly in evidence in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh between 1990 and 1993. In Gujarat, it suffered a demoralising split. In Maharashtra, where it

has been playing second fiddle to the Shiv Sena, it suffered a rout in the 1998 elections and looks set to be voted out in the next Assembly election. In the BJP's chosen battleground, Uttar Pradesh, spirited democratic resistance to its virulent communal politics and to the Ayodhya act of barbarism sent out the signal to the people that the *Hindutva* party could be effectively countered by a united secular and democratic combination. However, when the secular and democratic forces have failed to close ranks, the BJP has scored.

The BJP's claim to be different from other parties has been dented by unsavoury developments in several states, by rank opportunism in the alliance politics pursued, and by the involvement of some of its leaders in corruption scandals. But it is the brief and ongoing experience of the BJP leading the Central government that has undermined its political credibility. On the eve of major State Assembly elections, it seemed to be facing a desperate situation dominated by savage price rises and massive popular disillusionment. Its attempt to focus attention on issues unrelated to the people's livelihood exposed this political desperation. There is no indication whatever that the people of India are willing to buy the BJP's pseudo-nationalist agenda based on nuclear hawkishness and jingoism, efforts to smuggle in saffronization of education and minority-baiting.

The 'Third Force': Resurgence and Decline

In historical order of precedence, the United Front (UF) arrangement, and the National Front (NF) experiment that preceded and paved the way for it, must be placed after the Congress and the BJP. The NF phenomenon arose essentially as a response to the decline of the Congress and, to an extent, as a response to the BJP's activism and expansionism during the second half of the 1980s. Whereas the Janata Party coalition that was able to defeat the Emergency regime in the 1977 general election was a crystallization, under extreme circumstances, of the idea of all-in opposition unity (inclusive of the communal Jan

Sangh and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS) against the Congress, the National Front that took shape in 1988–89 represented a measure of differentiation in that it aspired to be anti-Congress as well as non-BJP.

However, 'pragmatism' (another name for political opportunism) dictated the JD and NF strategy of extensive seat adjustment with the party of *Hindutva* to unseat the Congress. The NF cannot claim to have made this decision in innocence. It bears critical emphasis that the line was worked out at a stage when the BJP had already launched its project of mobilising aggressively on the *Ram Janmabhoomi* issue—targeting the Babri Masjid and Muslims in general. It was no surprise that the NF's minority Government headed by VP Singh had to depend directly on the BJP, from start to finish, for its survival.

NF apologists might argue even today that the 'tactical' course was correct, since there was no other way the unpopular and corrupt Congress (I) could have been dislodged, at that juncture, from power. However, there can be little doubt that it was the BJP and not the JD and NF which gained from this experiment in expedient and uneasy cohabitation. While the BJP's core held firm and toughened itself through a *Rath yatra*, the JD suffered from internal splintering as well as the erosion of small to moderate bases in several electoral arenas where it had hoped to advance and score.

Generally speaking, those within the NF who took a firm line against both the BJP and the Congress (I) did well at the popular level. On the other hand, those who dithered, soft-pedalled or stood for a line of compromise have fared poorly since the NF Government fell in 1990.

In retrospect, the BJP's decision to withdraw support to the V P Singh Government on account of the latter's putting an end to the *Rath yatra* can be recognised as the best thing that happened to the NF from its moment of birth. By breaking free of the BJP's clutches, the secular and democratic character of the JD and the NF seemed redeemed. Secondly, the break helped to free the 'third formation', such as it was during an extended period of

disarray, from any illusion that the path of advance lay in collaboration with Hindu communalism.

The 'third force' progressed from the NF to the UF, entailing changes in composition and character and responding to a new context. This was a phase of resurgence. The NF was basically the Janata Dal plus two or three regional parties, neither more nor less. It was in alliance with the Left, the stable factor in the equation, which supported it wholly from outside. The UF sought to be a more representative and inclusive coalition. In this altered equation, the weight of regional parties, including those like Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP), which were offshoots of the Janata Dal and do not label themselves regional parties, increased significantly.

Further, the Left was now part of the coalition, although, as far as the leading Left party, the CPI (M), was concerned, not of the Government. Most important, the UF as a minority Government was dependent on the Congress (I) for survival. This dependence, unavoidable if there was to be any Government in New Delhi, was its defining weakness.

The second UF Government, headed by Inder Kumar Gujral, demonstrated contradictions and vacillations on several issues of policy importance. Its leader appeared to be too bent on survival to do well among the people on major political and socio-economic issues. From the start, it seemed incapable of taking any kind of principled stand against anyone accused of corruption and malfeasance in office, notably erstwhile Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal president Laloo Prasad Yadav.

The UF also suffered from other weaknesses. On economic policy questions, it seemed quite divided and the Government seemed incapable of any coherent thinking, let alone action. Most of the promises contained in the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) remained unmet. And relations between some UF constituents were in poor shape. It seemed guaranteed that in the few months allowed to the second UF government, the

Congress (I) would seek to impose toughened terms in return for unreliable support.

Although the Left's weight in the national polity has not increased much in post-Independence India, it has been in a position to play a role of qualitative importance in national politics. This has been thanks to, among other things, its clean image, its stand on national issues, and its mass campaigns on class and policy questions.

Quantitatively, the Left is the smallest of the forces or alignments being discussed here. Its weight in the national polity has not increased much over the fifty years of Independence. However, given its stable core and bases, its clean image, its spirited championing of secularism, national unity and federalism, the fight it has put up on economic policies, its mass campaigns in various states on class and policy issues, and its clarity and vision of the future, it has been in a position to play a role of qualitative importance in national politics. Political parties and formations today must advance or decline, stand or fall, on the stand they take on the major issues that have come to the fore in the Indian political arena fifty years after Independence. These issues are:

- a) political corruption on an unimaginable scale, combining with the criminalization of politics;
- b) the set of issues relating to growth, equity, justice and economic sovereignty raised by the post-1991 economic policies;
- c) the challenge to national unity posed by communalism as a political mobilization strategy;
- d) the threat of separatist movements backed, to some extent, from abroad;
- e) the challenge of social justice;
- f) the need for federalism and State autonomy;
- g) the need to do well in the areas of basic education, public health and meeting basic needs of the masses of the people;
- h) external pressures on India's foreign policy; and
- i) the imperative of sobriety and peace and good relations in the neighbourhood in the aftermath of the nuclear

adventurism of the BJP-led government and the swing of government policy, in a short period, from adventurism to virtual surrender to the terms being dictated by the United States and the advanced industrial countries.

This list is not exhaustive but indicates what needs to be tackled if India is to do significantly better in the period ahead than it did in the first half century of Independence. There is no need for excessive concern with stability at the Centre, since experience has shown that stability without democratic, secular and popular content, and without equity and justice, is simply not worth having.□

FOREIGN POLICY: RETROSPECT AND CHALLENGES

J N Dixit

As we complete 50 years of our Independence, there has been much introspection about various facets of our national experience as an independent nation. India's foreign policy and the role that India has played in the shifting equations in international relations has been a particular focus of attention in this process. At the end of the 50th anniversary of our Independence, we took a radical foreign policy and national security decision by conducting nuclear tests and becoming a nuclear weapon state. This decision has changed qualitatively, the paradigms within which India's foreign policy was functioning. So our exercise in analysis and review of our foreign policy will now have to be undertaken in a fundamentally transformed context.

I do not propose to undertake a detailed historical review of the evolution of India's foreign policy since the country attained Independence. I would, instead, undertake a shorter and more contemporary chronological review of India's foreign policy since the mid-eighties, when Rajiv Gandhi assumed power.

The trends and challenges which India faced from mid-eighties were the following:

- a) The cold war was disappearing. US-USSR consensus on international issues would require adjustments by India and other developing countries, whose policies were predicated on the leverage available to them due to the cold war.

- b) Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan would increase US and Pakistani influence and options for them in the Gulf and West Asian region.
- c) Pakistan itself would emerge as an assertive and self-assured entity in the South Asian region.
- d) Changed leadership in the Soviet Union and China resulted in a thaw in their attitudes towards each other.
- e) China adopted a more practical approach towards India, as indicated by Deng Xiaoping to Indian Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during the latter's visit to China in 1979.
- f) While older multilateral organisations and arrangements were losing their utility and sense of purpose (like G-77, UNCTAD, the non-aligned group), new centripetal forces were at work resulting in regional and sub-regional groupings being formed for technological, economic and commercial cooperation; their objective being to fashion a durable framework for peace and security in their respective regions.
- g) The potentialities of mechanisms of socio-economic management and development, conceived and operated since the Nehru era, had levelled off. Comparative inadequacies of a somewhat similar system in the socialist countries, particularly in the Soviet Union and China, were noted. India had to change gear and reorient its management to overcome internal socio-economic stagnation.
- h) Regardless of the factual situation of Indian commitment to principles of non-interference and peaceful coexistence, regional perceptions about India were that India harboured hegemonistic and regional power ambitions.
- i) At the end of the fourth decade after Independence, India was facing potent centrifugal pressures in Punjab and the North Eastern States. There was a tangible emerging internal threat to India's internal stability and security in terms of rising ethnic, linguistic and sub-provincial identities.

- j) Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons capability changed the South Asian military balance.
- k) Apart from Pakistan, India's neighbours like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were forging political and defence relationships with the U.S., China, Israel and other countries due to their perceptions about India.

Rajiv Gandhi initiated policies and measured responses to these challenges and trends. He opened up lines to the U.S. and other western countries, while sustaining requisite levels of relations with the Soviet Union; he commenced a greater diversification of sources for defence supplies and technologies. Signals were sent to China indicating India's willingness to normalize relations and resume discussions on the boundary issue. He established personal contacts with Zia Ul Haq and Jayawardene, Presidents of Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with whom India's relations were passing through a critical phase. Rajiv proposed a new time-bound initiative for nuclear disarmament, arms control and reduction in strategic arms and aimed at their elimination by the first decade of the 21st century. He started liberalization of the Indian economy. He expedited the creation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), proposed by Bangladesh in 1980 and participated in its first summit at Dhaka in December 1985. He was prompt in visiting Pakistan to meet Benazir Bhutto after the restoration of democracy in Pakistan in 1988, and then again in 1989, resulting in the important Indo-Pakistan agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. Rajiv put forward a number of proposals to enhance economic and cultural cooperation and people to people contact between India and Pakistan to build an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. He assured the Sri Lankan President that India's support to Tamil aspirations was matched by an equal commitment of India to Sri Lankan unity and territorial integrity. His last significant contribution to safeguarding India's security was his visit to China in December 1988, where the



India's territorial integrity remains under threat.

discussions with Deng Xiaoping started the gradual process of normalization of relations between China and India.

The continuing concern of our foreign policy are:

- i) India's territorial integrity remains under threat from Pakistan due to Pakistani claims on Jammu and Kashmir, and from China due to the still unresolved boundary dispute. In the latter case, the threat is not operational as it was till the late eighties. It remains, nevertheless, till a Sino-Indian agreement is reached on the subject.
- ii) Internal centrifugal forces continue to affect India's geo-political unity. There are demands for secession from segments of population in Jammu and Kashmir and the North-Eastern States of India. Incipient separatist aspirations have been expressed by some groups in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Orissa and North Bengal on and off since the late fifties/early sixties.
- iii) Adversary relations with Pakistan and China, and military conflicts with these countries have resulted in India having to divert its scarce financial, material and trained manpower resources for defence purposes, thereby reducing its capacities to formulate and implement social and economic policies for national consolidation and reconstruction.
- iv) Foreign countries and foreign think-tanks questioning the practicability of India's survival as a united polity because of religious, ethnic and linguistic diversities has been the recurrent refrain which India has to counter in one form or the other.
- v) Foreign military base and foreign military presences, including the deployment of strategic and tactical nuclear weapon system in India's neighbourhood, in the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean and in the Arab and African littoral countries have been a matter of apprehension to India.
- vi) China's overwhelming nuclear capacities and the presence of nuclear weapons in the Asian and Indian

Ocean regions have influenced India's foreign policy planning since 1964.

India has adjusted to the rapidly changing international and internal security environment since 1984-85. Constituent facts and elements of these environments will continue to determine the content of India's foreign policy and the direction it will take. Detailing these elements is therefore relevant.

First, the objective ground realities: the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union resulted in transforming the fundamental predilections in India's foreign policy. The relevance of non-alignment as manifested in the non-aligned movement, since its evolution, required a re-examination. Second, the leverage which India had due to its security linkages with the Soviet Union to safeguard its national security and to calibrate the geo-strategic environment around India for this purpose was lost. Thirdly, the process of globalization and information revolution necessitated India having to qualitatively reorient its economic, social and developmental policies. Fourth, India had to cope with a new agenda of international concerns like human rights and environment which ignored the diversity of individual concerns of developing countries. Fifth, the Cold war was not replaced by an harmonious world order but by new patterns of competition and incipient impulses for world domination by the advanced countries through expansion of security and economic arrangement dominated by the United States and by unilaterally stipulated discriminatory regimes of transfer of technologies, international trade, flow of investments, controlling the biological, mineral and genetic resources of the world, etc. Sixth, India had to define its position and find its place in the new regional groupings and politico-strategic security arrangements being put in place after the end of the Cold War. Seventh, India had to develop new equations with the emerging power centres of the world like North America, Western

Europe, Japan, China, Russia and the ASEAN. Eighth, India had to forge relations with newly emergent countries like South Africa, Central Asia, the former European and Eurasian Republics of the Soviet Union. Ninth, India had to diversify its defence and economic cooperation with various countries in conformity with new power equations emerging in the world. Over and above all, India had to cope with comparatively volatile and uncertain political and economic situation in its immediate neighbourhood in South Asia.

These challenges have remained constant into the 90s and at the threshold of the 21st Century. The Bharatiya Janata Party which is leading the present coalition Government of the country outlined its perceptions and orientations regarding India's foreign and national security policies as follows:

The end of the Cold War has brought with it hopes of an era of peace and harmony. We see many welcome new manifestations in our collective attitudes towards resolving long-standing international issues of common concern relating to the environment, health, economic development and conflict resolution.

While possibilities are immense, some old habits persist. We see a renewed tendency by some big powers to dominate and to impose conditionalities to advance their political and economic interests even if it is detrimental to others. There are also perceived civilizational conflicts as also spurts in conflicts. This demands that India's national interest must be protected and pursued more vigorously. Our diplomacy must, therefore, be pro-active rather than being merely reactive without sacrificing the values of peace, equality and cooperation.

In the recent past we have seen a tendency to bend under pressure. This arises as much

out of ignorance of our rightful place and role in world affairs as also from a loss of national self-confidence and resolve. A nation as large and capable as ourselves must make its impact felt on the world arena. A BJP government will demand a premier position for the country in all global fora.

The BJP rejects the notion of nuclear apartheid and will actively oppose attempts to impose a hegemonistic nuclear regime by means of CTBT, FMCR and MTCR. We will not be dictated by anybody in matters of security requirements and in the exercise of the nuclear option. We will pursue our national goals and principles steadfastly.

....The BJP reaffirms its commitment to peace amongst all nations, to the prosperity of the people of the world; and to an enhanced role for India in world affairs as befit this great and ancient civilisation.

The Nation faces grave challenges to its integrity and security as never before. The internal and external security environment has deteriorated sharply in the last decades. The previous Governments have been found wanting in their efforts and determination to face these threats and are responsible for this. Since 1991, the country's defence budget has been declining in real terms. It has declined from 3.4 per cent of the GDP in 1989-90 to mere 2.2 per cent this year. Successive weak and irresolute governments have imperilled national security. There is a mistaken view that there is a conflict between national security and economic development. But these two go hand-in-hand. There cannot be economic development without commensurate security preparation and the reverse, too, is equally true.

The dimensions and directions of present and future threats need to be constantly analyzed and evaluated. In the glaring absence of government interest and inter-ministerial coordination, the mechanism, for this have fallen into disuse. The armed forces have been ignored in defence policy planning. Misguided bureaucratic interference has demoralized the higher echelons of the armed forces and has also had a telling effect on defence preparedness. The BJP Government will take immediate steps to reverse such negative trends and establish coordination between the armed forces and the Government at all levels.

The BJP notes with concern the inadequate pace of defence research and development despite abundant talent available in DRDO. Inadequate budgetary support is a major reason for this. The inordinate delay in the LCA, nuclear submarine and guided missiles and other programmes are matters of particular concern. Our scientists and technologists are second to none and it is lack of political will and clarity on strategic issues that is the main cause of the delay. Defence production performance too has not been upto the mark. The performance of defence production units need to be monitored more closely and brought up to acceptable commercial and international standards.

To proceed now to analyse the rationale and implications of India's nuclear weaponization: Francis Bacon in his essay, 'Of Empire', wrote in 1625: "A just fear of an imminent danger, though there be no blow given is a lawful cause." This in itself is a sufficient answer to all critics questioning India's conducting five nuclear tests on the 11th and 13th of May and declaring itself a nuclear weapon state. It is an irony of geo-politics and strategic

developments that India which has been a convincing and articulate advocate of complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and a votary of general and complete non-discriminatory disarmament should convert itself into an overt nuclear weapon state, creating a new platform to argue for the cause of disarmament. The rationale which impelled India to move towards a nuclear weaponized status merits some historical recall.

Jawaharlal Nehru was among the first world statesman who strongly argued for elimination of nuclear weapons and of related weapons system in the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. India has been a consistent advocate of complete and general nuclear disarmament. From 1947 right upto 1996, the Government of India was an active architect of the Partial Test Ban treaty. India continued to argue for the elimination of all categories of weapons of mass destruction at the United Nations and the conference on Disarmament at Geneva in its different incarnations over the last five decades. But the nuclear weapon powers continued to modernize their nuclear arsenals, focussed attention on arms control rather than genuine disarmament compounding the whole process negatively by introducing a series of international regimes which distinguish between nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states with discriminatory provisions aimed at limiting the technological potentialities of the latter in the use of nuclear energy and space. The adoption of the NPT in 1966, its indefinite extension in 1995 and the final draft of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty reflected this phenomenon.

India refused a suggestion from the USA in 1963 that it produce an atom bomb as a counter to anticipated nuclear weaponization of China in 1964. This Indian attitude was consciously adopted despite India's proven capacity to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and its being technologically competent to make nuclear weapons.

It was only in 1972 when Pakistan commenced its clandestine nuclear weaponization programme that India took the unavoidable counter-measure of conducting the nuclear test at Pokhran on 18 May 1974. The rationale of Pakistan's nuclear weaponization programme according to the Pakistan Government was that after being defeated by India in 1971 Pakistan should acquire such force multiplier capacities that it would never again be defeated by India in a conventional conflict where India would always have an upper hand. Even after conducting the 1974 nuclear test, India acted with utmost discipline and self-restraint for 24 years till 11 May 1998. Despite not signing the NPT, India did not conduct any test during this period. India has never exported nuclear weapons technology or equipment to any country in the world. India has put nuclear reactors which it built in collaboration with foreign countries under IAEA safeguards. India has objected only to discriminatory full scope safeguards being imposed on non-nuclear weapons states. India's nuclear technological work has been conducted by civilian research organisations. India's nuclear activities are subject to scrutiny by the Indian Parliament. Despite this responsible and disciplined behaviour, India was the focus of restrictions and discriminatory pressures from nuclear weapon powers and through multilateral fora aimed at preventing India from realising its technological potential and meeting its strategic and security requirements. There has been a growing general consensus in Indian public opinion that India should transcend this pressure.

The discussions, preceding the finalization of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, were perceived in India as final proof of the existing nuclear weapon powers wanting to relegate India and other technologically advanced developing countries to a second class status. This was a very sharp and precise perception because India had assurances from the USA and other advanced countries that the CTBT would not be discriminatory and not distinguish between nuclear weapon states and non-

nuclear weapon states India had co-sponsored the resolution for the drafting of this treaty with the United States in 1993. But the treaty as it evolved clearly indicated that the assurances given to India were being given the go by.

Another dimension of the situation was that the deliberate ambiguity which India had practised about its nuclear weapon capacities was being used as an argument to immediately cap, roll back and eliminate India's nuclear defence capacities. This is the general background which impelled India to conduct the tests on May 11 and May 13. But there were more immediate reasons. Pakistan had not only acquired nuclear weapon capacities and missile capability in delivering nuclear war-heads, but Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and senior figures of the Pakistan Government actually threatened the use of such weapons against India from 1995-96 onwards. Pakistan had acquired M-11 missiles from China and Ndong II missiles from North Korea which are capable of delivering nuclear warheads to Indian targets. Pakistan has also set up a missile factory at a place called Fatehganj, fifty kilometres from Islamabad to produce various categories of missiles. In April 1998 Pakistan test-fired the Ghauri missile which is an IRBM. Pakistan announced that it was going to evolve and test-fire Ghaznavi and Babri missiles which would have a longer range, bringing most of India within Pakistan's target range.

There are military nuclear presences of the U.S. and China, land based, airborne and sea-borne in the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean stretching from Diego Garcia to the Straits of Hormuz to the Gulf and from the Gulf in a semi-circular arc right up to the South China Sea.

This apart, China has been pursuing a multi-faceted defence modernization and force multiplier programme with military and technology imports valued at nearly 20 billion US dollars over the last five years or so. China's nuclear weapon capacities and increasing missile technology capacities are a factor in the evaluation being

made by India about the strategic and regional security environment. Whatever official rationalisation and justification may be given, the multi-dimensional, technology defence cooperation between China and Pakistan, affects the threat perception of India. It is not a question of whether China has any aggressive military intention towards India in the short term or in the near future. This may not be so. But the total weapon environment around India as it is evolving required an adequate response.

India also felt that if it did not conduct the tests and lay the political and technological foundations for nuclear and missile defence now, it would not be able to break out of the straight jacket of the stipulations of the CTBT which will come into force within a year and the FMCT which is now in the pipeline.

In sum, India's having the nuclear bomb is justified, first, on the ground of its national security requirement in the present regional context; secondly, as a continuing basis for technological self-reliance for defence purposes; thirdly to structure a strategic balance in its neighbourhood given the weapons capacities and deployment of super powers in the region and finally to avoid being subjected to restrictive and punitive international regime by being categorised as a non-nuclear weapon state. Whatever the legal quibbles, the de-facto India's nuclear weapons status cannot be questioned. The Indian objective is to change the discriminatory terms of reference governing negotiations on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, which are sought to be perpetrated by the existing nuclear weapon states. This is precisely why India may not be included to sign CTBT in its present form much less the NPT. And most important of all, India's nuclear weaponization is motivated more by political and strategic purposes than operational military intentions. India will only opt for the latter under compelling and unavoidable circumstances.

Taking note of the fact that India's self-restraint did not evoke a rational response from the international community, particularly the super powers, India per force has had to accept the wisdom of the dictum given by George Herbert in *Jacula Prudentum* in 1651 that "Having one sword keeps other two swords in their sheaths."

On balance, the failures and achievements of our foreign policy during this first fifty years of our existence can be summed up as follows:

During the first decade and a half of our Independence, our foreign policy was imbued with idealism and an unrealistically positive vision of a world order. This approach resulted in our not meeting our national interests on some specific issues. Our going to the UN to neutralize the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir our acquiescing in China's take over of Tibet. Our gradualistic and then suddenly assertive approach on the evolving boundary dispute with China from 1956 onwards leading to our military defeat in the 1962 war confirmed this assessment.

We acquired an influence in world affairs quite disproportionate to our economic, political and military strength because of Pandit Nehru's moral stature and international influence. As long as Nehru lived, India's leadership could be sustained. His passing away from the scene should have adjusted us to political realities, making us play a more realistic role in international affairs. What actually happened was that we acquired a mindset from the Nehru legacy which hankered for an international leadership role, regardless of whether the rest of the world was willing to accept India in this role and regardless of whether India had the necessary resources and power to lay claim to this role. Our desire to play such a role also became a limitation on us to act decisively in our national interests at times. We also landed ourselves in contradictory predicaments because of our claim that we deal with international issues from a high moral ground and not on the basis of realpolitik,

whether it was the police action in Hyderabad, the military operations against the Portuguese in Goa, and the contradictory manner in which we reacted to the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia and the British-French invasion of Egypt or the Arab invasion of Israel in the late 60s and 70s. The same contradictions were manifested as late as the 90s in relation to the US military operations in Libya, Grenada and Panama on the one hand and Kuwait's invasion by Iraq on the other.

There are perfectly acceptable reasons why India acted in the manner in which it did in terms of India's national interests but we were to be on the defensive because of our reluctance to get down from the artificial moral pedestal which we had built for ourselves. An example of foreign reaction to this predicament of our was a conversation which I had with one of the seniormost State Department officials on the U.S.A.'s unfair criticism of India's human rights record. This U.S. official neutralized my assertive questioning of U.S. judgement by saying:

India faces this problem because India has itself defined high moral standards about its socio-political behaviour on issues of international concern like human rights. We are only judging you by the standards which you claim yourselves. You do not see us as critical about countries like China, Egypt or Indonesia, because they do not speak to us from a moral high ground which you do.

Another self-created shortcoming (not a failure) in our foreign policy mindset is the desire to get good conduct certificates from other countries about ourselves, namely, that we are a great country, that we deserve to be leaders among developing countries, that because of our virtues, we must automatically become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. We want other countries to look up to us as an important regional and, if possible, global entity. This Narcissism results in unrealistic ambitions, hypothetical plausibilities and petulant frustrations in

our foreign policy. This mindset can and should be assiduously avoided.

The following can be considered the success of India's foreign policy:

1. Despite the enormous diversities and centrifugal forces affecting India, we have remained a united country.
2. We have safeguarded our territorial integrity despite external threats and pressures which we have faced through subversion, military threats and political challenges.
3. Despite negative perceptions about India amongst India's neighbours, howsoever unjustified they may be, we have maintained a working relationship with our neighbours in overall terms, whatever the interim ups and downs. In more recent years we have managed to stabilize our relations even with Pakistan and Bangladesh with whom we have some fundamental disputes to resolve
4. We have retained our foreign policy, our nuclear, space and technological options, despite continuous negative pressures on us to fall in line with arrangements which would have been detrimental to our national interest
5. We have managed to structure a working relationship with all the major power centres of the world on a continuous basis over the last 50 years.
6. We are an effective and credible member of all the multilateral fora dealing with global issues, even if we are not given the role and position due to us because of power politics.
7. We have managed our defence and foreign economic relations with sufficient imagination and flexibility to meet our interests and to ensure the security and well-being of our people in a complex world.
8. We have achieved all this as a democracy subject to contradictory pulls and pressures of a plural society

characterised by enormous diversities. What India has achieved in terms of foreign policy is something which all the countries of Europe are still in the process of achieving after nearly 300 years of experience as nation-states with smaller populations and endowed with much greater resources.

At this juncture of our passage past the half a century milestone of existence as a Republic, we must be capable of critical introspection about these matters. There is every reason for us to be imbued with hope, only if we remain united as a country and do not succumb to the forces of fragmentation and divisiveness. □



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at the Pokhran Nuclear Test Site

INDIA'S DEFENCE

K Subrahmanyam

Shakti Tests and After

The recent developments in the country following the Indian nuclear tests on May 11 and May 13, 1998 highlighted how poorly India's security imperatives have been understood among large sections of our political class, academia and media. India's decolonization and partition, the integration of over 560 princely states, the war over Kashmir against the two-nation theory of Pakistan, the liberation of Bangladesh, the war of 1962 against Maoist hegemony, the continuous struggle to uphold India as a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic union and finally our nuclear and missile efforts to prevent India being incorporated in the global nuclear hegemonic order—all together constitute the saga of Indian defence. India is an integral civilizational entity and represents the progressive trend towards integration of humanity under a democratic, secular and humanitarian order. In promoting that order India faces the negative forces of theocratic fundamentalism, parochialism of various types, authoritarian ideologies and global hegemonism. A just social order, good governance and a poverty-free society are symbiotically related to effective defence and assured national security. A prudent parent cannot think of education, health and nourishment of his children as a mutually exclusive proposition from paying his insurance. The two have to be optimized.

India's defence represents that optimization. In spite of multi-faceted challenges to security faced by this country, the Indian defence expenditure, as percentage of gross domestic product, has been very modest. It was less than 2 per cent in the first 15 years of independence, around 3.3 per cent in the next 25 years, except for a few years when it just reached four per cent and less than 2.5 per cent in the recent years. By world standards and given the magnitude of the security problems the country has to face, India can claim to have met its security needs at a very modest cost.

India was compelled to fight four international wars—three with Pakistan and one with China. It did reasonably well in the first three and suffered a reverse in the fourth. The reverse is more due to lack of psychological preparedness to face the Chinese rather than for want of men and materials as popularly believed. The reverse arose because the country's leadership did not take the Armed Forces, the bureaucracy, the Parliament and the people into confidence on the nature of the Chinese threat. Unfortunately, the same mistake was repeated in the recent times when successive political leadership did not take the Parliament and the people into confidence on the Sino-Pakistan nuclear and missile collaboration and the US connivance of it over the last 15 years. Nor did they educate the country on the nuclearized hegemonic order which had been extended all over the globe except for South Asia and which was on the point of being imposed on this country as well. The Indian nuclear tests came in time to avert that disaster.

The entire Industrial world and the former republics of the Soviet Union are in the nuclear security framework of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The entire western hemisphere is protected by the US nuclear arsenal as the US is the dominant leader of Organisation of American States (OAS). Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand have bilateral security treaties with the US providing

them the American extended nuclear deterrence. China is a nuclear weapon power. The South Pacific nations, the African continent and the ASEAN have all accepted the nuclear protectorate status by forming themselves into nuclear weapon free zones which accept the legitimacy of nuclear weapons of the five most war-prone and hegemonic powers and seek their guarantees not to use the nuclear weapons against them. The Gulf Cooperation Council is under the implicit protection of US Central Command and fifth fleet. This nuclearised global security system left India extremely vulnerable and therefore India had to become a nuclear weapon state to overcome this vulnerability. In 1995 the international community was coerced and cajoled by the five hegemonic powers to legitimize the nuclear weapons—the most horrendous weapon of mass destruction—through the unconditional and indefinite extension of the Non-proliferation Treaty which until then was a limited, cold war arms control measure for 25 years duration.

That legitimization of the nuclear weapons in the hands of five nuclear weapon powers was followed by their attempt to prevent any new nation acquiring nuclear weapons. They sought to impose a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which was given a specific anti-India twist by China. While India was prepared to allow the treaty to be adopted by the rest of the international community, it indicated its unwillingness to sign it since the nuclear issue was a matter of vital security concern to India. At that stage China introduced a clause making it imperative for India to sign the treaty to bring it into force. This was a clear violation of the Vienna Convention on the law of the treaties which stipulates that obligations arising out of a treaty cannot be imposed on a country not a party to it. In spite of such blatant flouting of the international convention, once again the international community, most of which has been fitted into the nuclear hegemonic regime, adopted the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

It is quite obvious what the Chinese strategy is. While it has been arming Pakistan with nuclear weapons and missiles, it was preventing India from conducting nuclear tests and attempting to coerce it from acquiring nuclear weapons. This was a sophisticated way of developing the option to impose hegemony on India. In 1963, when the international community adopted the Partial Test Ban Treaty prohibiting all nuclear tests in the atmosphere China denounced the treaty and conducted a large number of open air tests producing vast quantities of radioactive fallouts which affected the rest of the world, particularly India. Therefore it is obvious China is not very different from other nuclear weapon powers in its hegemonic attitude, having one set of standards for itself and prescribing another for other nations. The Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee has accused the White House of indulging in fudging of facts on the Chinese proliferation of M-11 missiles to Pakistan. If the proliferation is admitted by US Administration, the US sanction laws require that China be prevented from launching US satellites and getting a number of high technologies. There are powerful commercial interests in US which are interested in sanctions not being applied on China. They appear to have significant influence on the White House. Therefore the US Administration has been conniving at Chinese proliferation of missile and nuclear technologies to Pakistan. The recent Clinton visit to Beijing proved how closely China and the Clinton Administration act together in attempting to impose nuclear hegemony on the Indian subcontinent.

This present policy is not in long term US interests and therefore appears to be motivated by President Clinton's personal predilections. India, emerging as a nuclear weapon power, will in fact, stabilise the Asian balance of power. Otherwise China, blocked by the Russian nuclear potential to the north and US-protected Japan to the east, would attempt to dominate South and South-east Asia. Only a poly-centric balance of power in

Asia comprising the US, Russia, Japan, India and China will ensure that China will be embedded in a stable system and transmit smoothly towards democracy. There is increasing understanding of this factor in the US and other parts of the world even as Clinton Administration pursues its parochial pro-China policy just as President Nixon did in 1971.

With both India and Pakistan acquiring nuclear weapons, the prospects for peace and stability in the sub-continent have improved. While Pakistan unleashed three wars on India on the calculation that the Indian leaders would not have the will to resist, there has been interstate peace in the subcontinent in the last 26 years since India has kept a military margin over Pakistan in conventional arms. There is a widely accepted view that the mutual deterrence between the two nations arising out of their perceptions of existence of nuclear weapons on the other side, though undeclared, ensured that the covert war waged by Pakistan in Kashmir did not escalate. Even otherwise high intensity conventional wars with large organized forces do not lead to meaningful military results. The experiences of 1965 and 1971 wars tell us that the capabilities of India and Pakistan are so matched that neither side can penetrate deep into the territory of the other. With added factor of nuclear deterrence, it should lead to stability on the basis of acceptance of the status quo. That is the lesson of the nuclear era.

Covert War

However, India has been compelled to deal with prolonged covert war waged against it from across the border since 1983. It was first in Punjab and as the Indian security forces were able to counter the terrorist campaign waged by the Khalistani insurgents, with the support of the people of Punjab, Pakistan opened a new front in covert war in Kashmir. Over the previous decade some of the extremist and secessionist organisations in

the Kashmir Valley had been sending young men across the actual line of control, a proportion of them had succumbed to the extremist propaganda and a large proportion to coercion. These were trained in camps run by the Inter Services Intelligence wing of Pakistan. Throughout the eighties as part of the effort to support the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviet forces in Afghanistan the Central Intelligence Agency of the US had been building a vast stockpile of man-portable arms in Pakistan. The narcotics cultivation and trade became a stable source of financing the insurgency. Even after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan the Pakistan Inter Services Intelligence Wing retained enormous stockpiles of small arms, the mercenaries who came to fight in Afghanistan and continued the narcotics trade. These assets were utilized to unleash and sustain the terrorist campaign in Kashmir from 1989. The local grievances of the people because of the earlier misrule by the State administration was also fully exploited.

In 1965, when Pakistan sent across its infiltrators into Kashmir, the Indian Army crossed the ceasefire line and destroyed the training camps, Pakistan then escalated the situation into a full scale war. In 1989-90 Pakistan was presumably confident that since it had acquired nuclear weapons, India would not be able to escalate the retaliation against covert operations to a conventional war which might carry with it further escalation risk of nuclear exchange. Pakistani leaders also openly conveyed the threat that any attack on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir might lead to Pakistani use of nuclear weapons. The specific threat was contained in the speech of Mr. Nawaz Sharif at Nila Bhatt on 24 August 1994. India had therefore been compelled to fight the covert war within its own territory. The covert war has resulted in over 18,000 casualties of both civilian and security personnel in the last eight years. More casualties have been incurred in this covert war than in all other international wars India had fought.

Covert war against India has not been restricted to Kashmir only. In March 1993, a series of blasts were set off in the city of Bombay inflicting more than 200 casualties. Investigations revealed that these were set off by people who had links with Pakistan and 7 tons of RDX explosives were landed on the Maharashtra coast. A transport aircraft taking off from Karachi dropped arms over Purulia more than 1000 miles inside the Indian territory. In North East India insurgents obtain arms and explosives from external sources. Ships with arms intended to be landed in India have been seized by the Indian Navy in the Bay of Bengal. Both on the east and west of India are the two largest narcotics production areas of the world. The golden triangle—Burma-Laos-Thailand intersection and the golden crescent in Afghanistan-Pakistan area generate most of the heroin for the world. Drug trade, small arms spread, organized crime syndicates and money laundering have very intimate and interactive relationship. In turn, they are often used by intelligence agencies of the same countries to carry out covert war operations. Nowadays, nations which want to target the economic, social and political system of an adversary state prefer to resort to covert war strategies as a low cost option for the aggressor and relatively higher cost one for the defender. India has been targeted for the covert war for well over 15 years.

While defence against covert war operations call for strengthening both intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities, effective use of both police and para military forces, specially trained counter-insurgency units, psychological war operations and good and effective governance, conventional armed forces, adequately equipped with the state of art weaponry are also necessary as an insurance. This new security situation after May 11, 1998 calls for a new thinking on national security management. India inherited a decision making model prescribed by Lord Ismay during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Louis Mountbatten and that needs

to be reviewed to suit the challenges of security in the nuclear and covert war era.

New Challenges

The new government set up a task force to make recommendations on setting up a National Security Council. The task force has submitted its report and it is hoped that the Government will take early decisions to set up the National Security Council with an appropriate secretariat. An integrated approach to national security has become imperative in the light of lack of awareness in this vital area displayed by large sections of the public in the wake of the nuclear tests and the lack of accountability of the leadership of political parties to their cadres.

Looking back over the last 50 years, the Indian Armed forces have contributed significantly to national integration. They helped in the integration of princely states—Junagarh, Hyderabad and Kashmir. They carried out decolonization of Goa. They helped to neutralize the secessionist trends in Nagaland, Mizoram, Kashmir, Punjab and the North-east. They have fought against four external aggressions. They helped in the liberation of Bangladesh which enabled ten million Bangladeshi refugees to return home in honour and dignity. They went to Sri Lanka twice in 1971 and 1987 at the request of the Sri Lankan Government to help fight insurgencies. They have the richest experience of all armed forces in the world in peace keeping operations under the UN flag.

The Indian Armed Forces also reflect India's commitment to a democracy unlike a number of armed forces in other developing countries. They have been strictly apolitical, and have always functioned as an instrumentality of democratic governance. In its composition, it draws its officers and men from all over the country and is therefore a national institution. Its operation experience is also unique. From the deserts of Rajasthan, the heights of Siachen, the cold desert of

Ladakh, snowy mountains of the north, to the dense forests of Assam and the North-east they operate in every kind of terrain. They can boast of having conducted counter insurgency operations which brought the insurgent leaders to the negotiating table to accept the Indian Constitution and assume office as responsible leaders of States.

As we celebrate fifty years of independent India, the second half of this period has been free of interstate wars but India had to face security problems of a different kind—nuclear hegemony, covert wars and other forms of non-military threats to our security. While the Indian armed forces and Indian scientists have contributed significantly to our national security preparedness, not adequate attention has been paid by the Parliament and politicians to evolve pro-active policies to meet the new challenges to our security. It is hardly realized by most of our political class that on May 11, 1998 this country rewrote its own history and that of the world. We have challenged the Yalta-Potsdam order consolidated with nuclear weapons as currency of power. We have indicated that India cannot be counted out of a global role and a balance of power in Asia. Therefore, the negative reaction of the patrons of the hegemonic order was not surprising. While the indications are that the present nuclear order has to adjust itself to the three hitherto undeclared nuclear weapon states (India, Pakistan and Israel), this adjustment has no precedent in history. The Indian security problem is also unique since the country is placed between two nuclear weapon powers between whom there is an ongoing nuclear weapon technology relationship.

China is a rising power and is now being treated by the US as a second police in a bipolar world. Though there is no need to anticipate any active adverse relationship between China and India, the rise of China as a global power constitutes a major equilibrium change in international politics just as the Indian nuclear tests

were. Adjustments to this change in the status quo will call for pro-active and innovative foreign and security policies on the part of India. The Indian armed forces will have to be modernized and equipped for this role and that has to be done at an affordable cost. India, being a democratic country, a secular and open society with an apolitical and democratically committed armed force has certain inherent advantages. Our indigenous science base is yet another.

Though there is no reason to anticipate tensions and conflicts at interstate level in the region, the management of this transition from the nuclear hegemonic order of the Yalta-Potsdam era to a truly poly-centric stable balance of power is bound to call for diplomatic and strategic skills of an order this country has not so far displayed. □

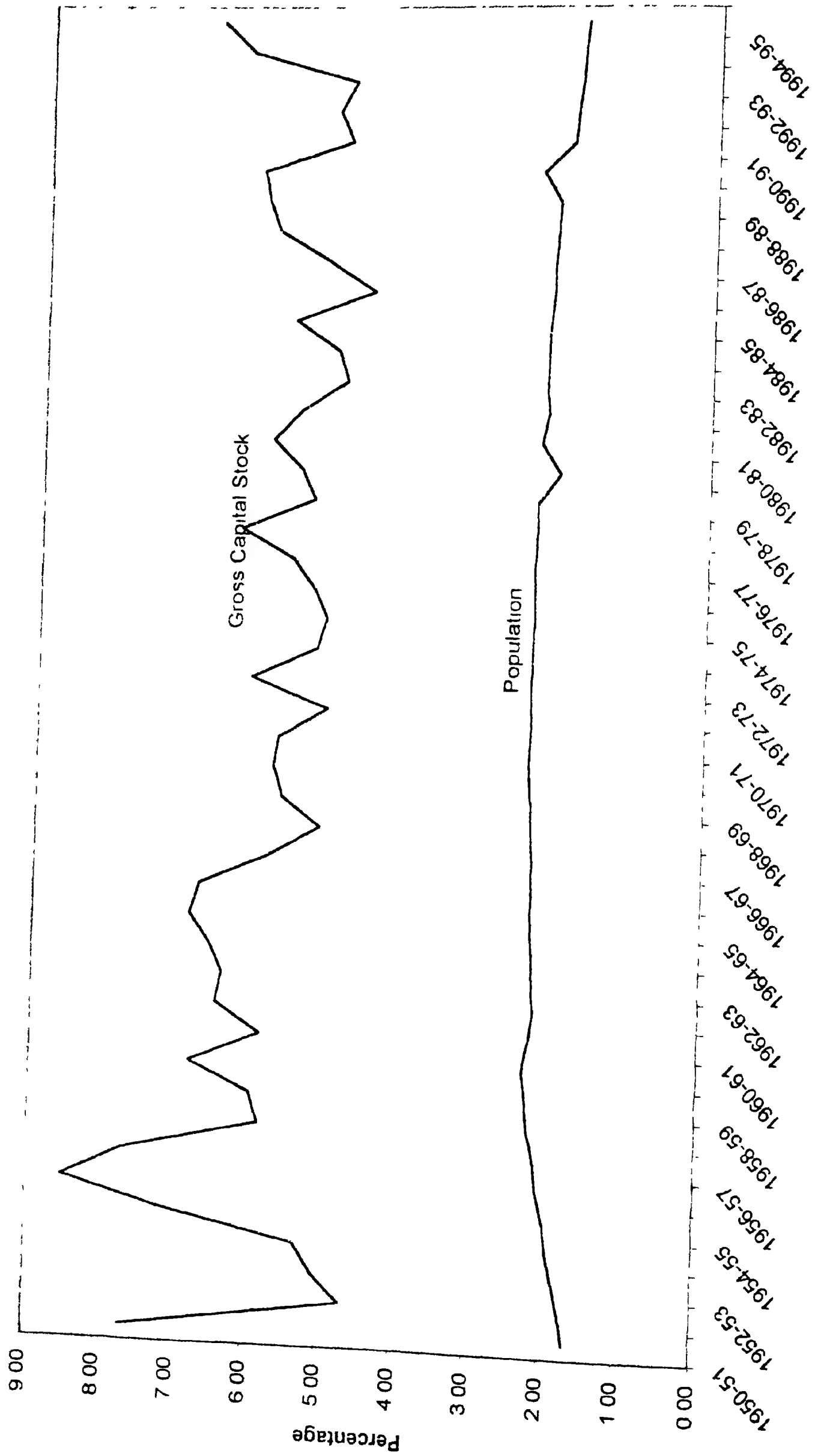
THE ECONOMY SINCE INDEPENDENCE

P R Brahmananda

When India attained Independence on 15 August 1947, the advent of freedom after centuries of colonial rule was accompanied by the agony of partition. The immediate post-Independence years till 1952–53 were years of shortages and rising prices. The First Five Year Plan began in 1951–52. In 1951 we had a very severe food crisis and were living from ship to mouth. The First Five Year Plan was a success beyond anticipation. The Second Five Year Plan ushered in the Mahalanobis heavy industries strategy of self-reliance. The investment pattern was geared to development of heavy industries largely for their own sake. India got into the same groove as the Soviet Union got in after Stalin. However, the import of PL 480 wheat on a large scale prevented food shortages. Agricultural development got less attention than heavy industry development. We also started moving on the path of inflation by deficit financing for capital expenditures. These along with Chinese invasion had their repercussions on the economy, weakening the Rupee and causing inflation, though moderate when compared to current standards. The years of 1965–66 and 1966–67 were characterized by very severe droughts and India had to import huge quantities of wheat from the United States. The Third Five Year Plan was a colossal failure.

The Rupee had to be devalued in June 1966. From 1967–68, we had the advent of the Green Revolution involving

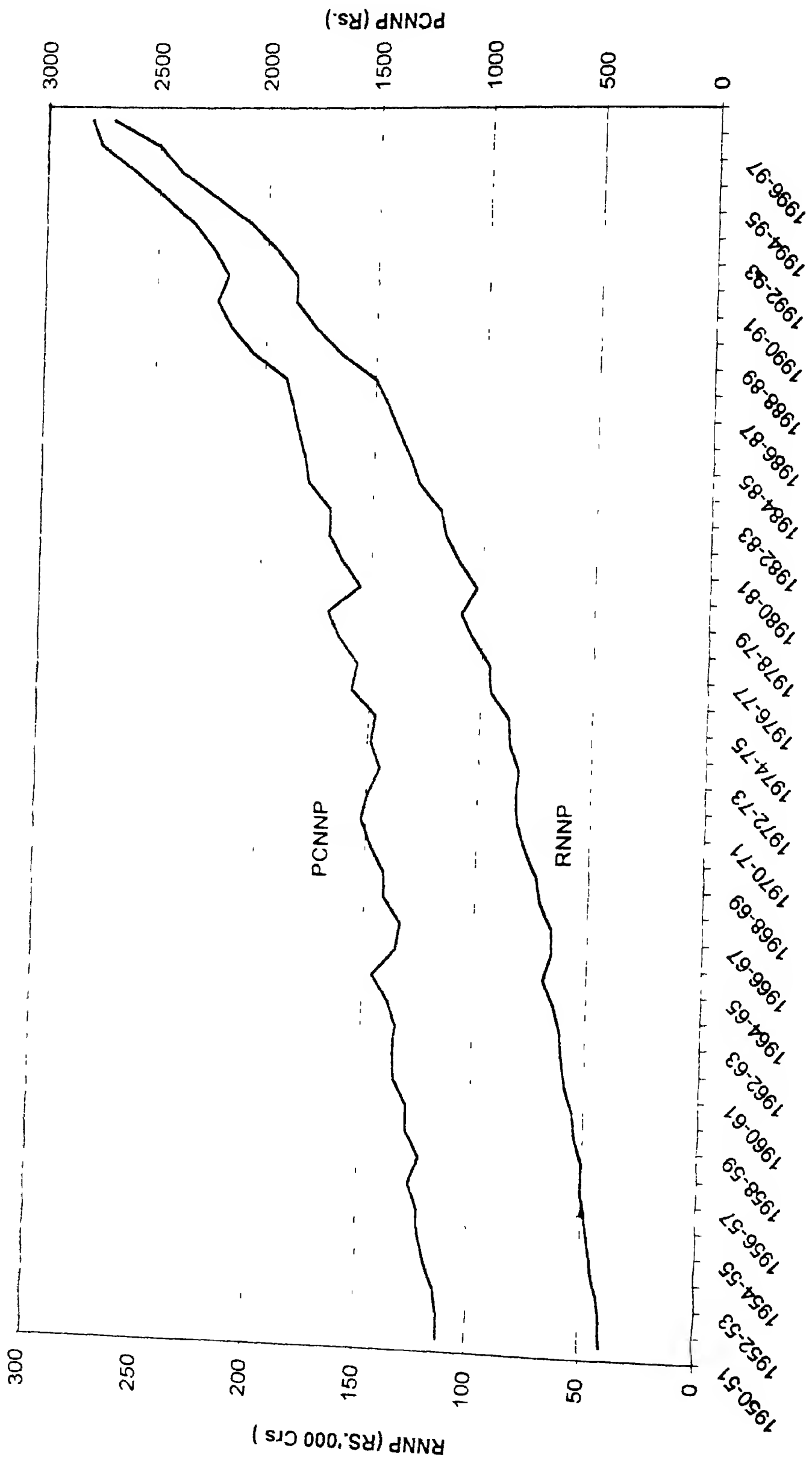
Graph 1
Annual Rate of Growth of Capital Stock and of Population



triple inputs in agriculture in the form of better seeds, water and fertilizers. From that year, food production started growing in terms of yields. Earlier, production had to grow by bringing more area under cultivation. The oil crisis of early seventies temporarily upset the economy. But because of large remittance inflows the balance of payment did not get seriously affected. There was large scale expansion of irrigation and exports were picking up. The Fifth Five Year Plan saw close to 5 per cent growth rate. During the period of 1972–73, in the aftermath of the Bangladesh war, there were severe inflation. The rate of inflation crossed 20 per cent. In 1974 economists put up a Memorandum with policy suggestions to contain inflation and the government started implementing many of them. Inflation came under control by late 1974. During 1978–79 India became a net lender to the rest of the world. But the oil price shock of 1979–80 upset the trade balance very much and India had to go in for a 5 million dollar loan from the IMF. The situation improved from the early Eighties and we were able to forego the last instalment of the loan.

From mid-Eighties India started liberalizing the economy. Import duties were reduced and industrial controls were relaxed. Industrial growth rate picked up and we started having successively good harvests. But the trade and current account deficits were high and rising because of large scale defence imports. The latter and the Gulf war crisis in 1990 put the economy into a very severe crisis. In early 1991 we had to mortgage Gold. Foreign creditors wanted the loan to be repaid quickly. From August 1991 revolutionary changes occurred in our economic policy affecting industry, trade, money, finance and the system of exchange rates. The economy started witnessing 7 per cent growth rate. Foreign investment started coming to India in large volume. Domestic investment rate also picked up. Foreign financial fund started pouring in. The inflation rate started coming down and reached a low of 4 per cent by the early months of 1997. Somehow again the economy got into a crisis,

Graph 2
Real Income and Per Capita Real Income (at 80-81 Prices)



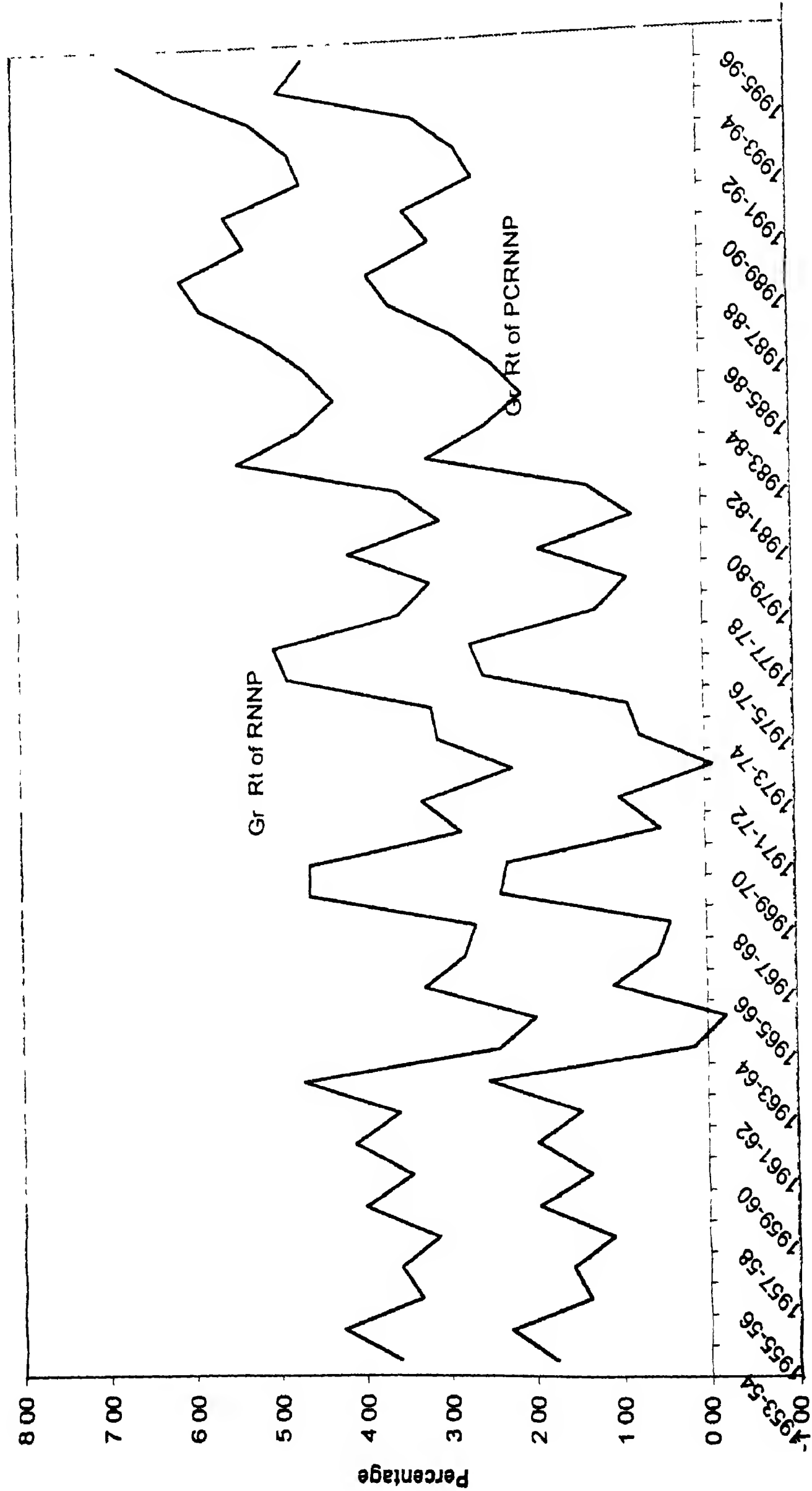
currently aggravated by sanctions. The growth rate has temporarily moved down. There is also considerable political uncertainty and there is no economic consensus which can be believed in. This is the broad story of economic progress in India since Independence. We now briefly look at the quantitative indicators of performance.

The annual population growth rate over the entire period from 1950 to 1998 is 2.15 per cent. During 1990–97 the annual population growth rate has been placed at 1.8 per cent as compared to 2.24 per cent during the seventies. Over the entire period population size has nearly trebled. Currently in a few states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa, the birth rate has been going down. But in most of the states they continue to be high, specially in the BIMARU states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

National Income at constant price has grown over the entire period at an annual rate of 3.87 per cent. During the eighties, the annual growth rate of national income was 5.33 per cent and during 1990–97 it jumped up to 5.86 per cent as compared to 3.2 per cent in the sixties and seventies. Per capita real national product took 43 years to double itself. For the entire period of annual average growth rate was 1.68 per cent. During the sixties, it was as low as 0.95 per cent and during 1990–97 it moved up to 3.93 per cent. India is one of the few countries in the world where it took so long a time to double the per capita real income.

The gross domestic savings ratio was about 10.4 per cent in 1950–51 and moved to 13.9 per cent by 1955–56. It was lower than this during the Second Plan period and during the early sixties. It started moving up from the late seventies when it crossed 20 per cent. But after the advent of reforms in 1991–92 it has further moved up to 25 to 26 per cent. The growth rate of real gross capital stock was around 6.3 per cent per annum during the fifties and was around 5.3 per cent till 1990. Thereafter it has moved up to a rate of growth of 5.6 per cent per annum.

Graph 3
Sequential 5 yearly Simple Average Growth Rates (in %)

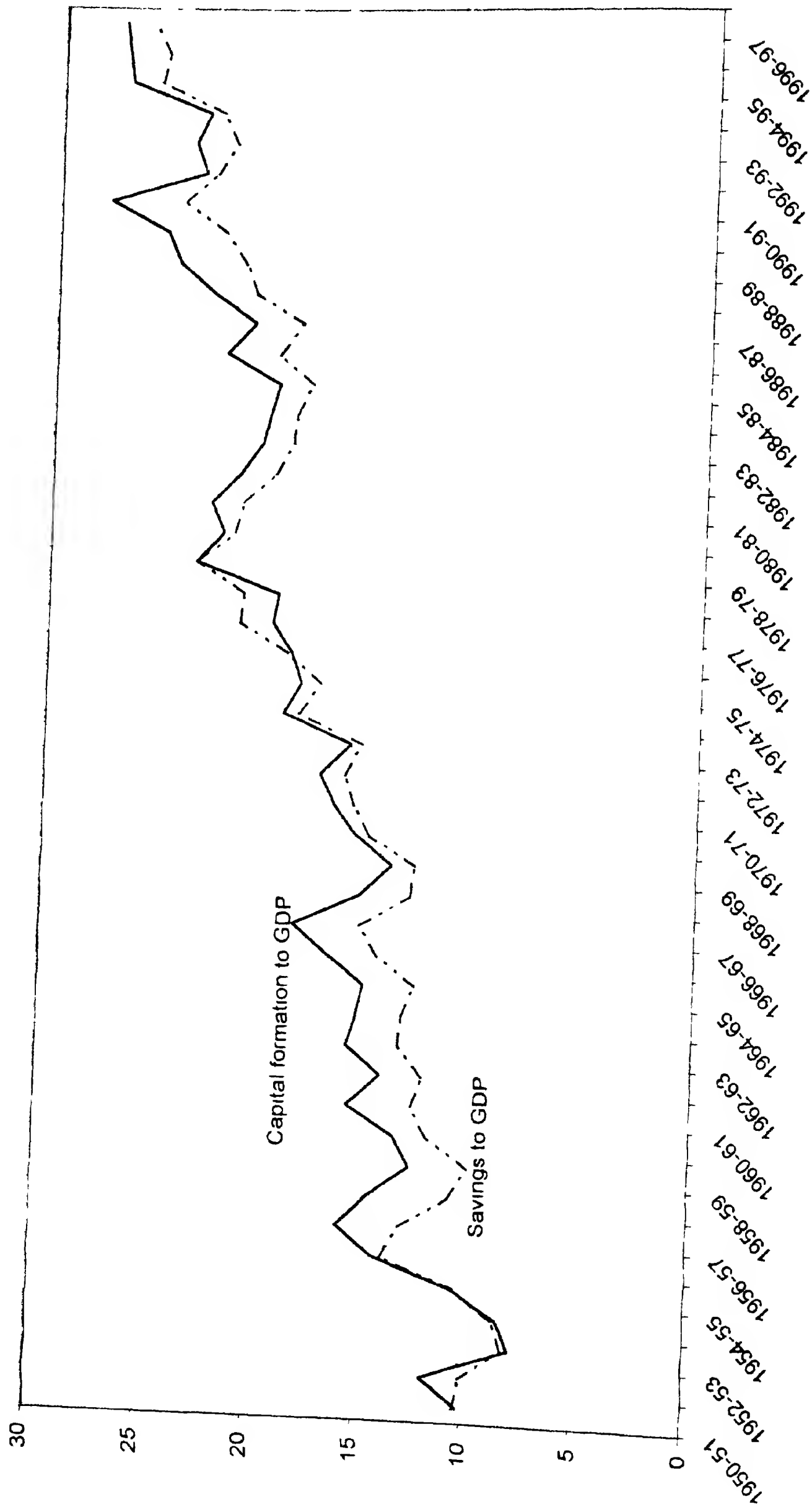


The capital output ratio was less than 2.0 during the First Plan. Thereafter it started moving up and reached a high of 4.52 in 1987–88. Liberal imports with reduced duties and the growth of capital-light industries and of services has brought down the ratio to 4.35 by 1997–98. With an investment to income ratio of about 27 per cent and a capital output ratio of 4.3 we should easily obtain an average growth rate of plus 5 per cent. If foreign investment flows can increase to more than 2 per cent per annum, and saving ratio also goes up to 28 per cent and the capital output ratio goes on moving down, we should obtain an average growth rate of 6 to 7 per cent per annum. But these are possibilities and not probabilities of reasonable value.

The consumption of wage-goods, consumption necessities, over the entire period from 1950 to 1997 has been going up at an annual rate of 3.21 per cent. During the fifties, it went up at a rate of 3.16 per cent per annum. This came down to 2.84 per cent during the sixties. Thereafter, it has been going between 3 to 3.5 per cent per annum. The growth rate of consumption necessities continues to be less than the growth rate of income all along. Foodgrains productions for the entire period has been growing at 2.46 per cent per annum. The highest annual growth rate was during the eighties at 3.3 per cent per annum. From 1990 to 1997 the growth rate had slumped to 1.36 per cent per annum. This is substantially less than the population growth rate of 1.79 per cent per annum during the same period. The relation between increase in income and the increase in wage-goods consumption is the wage-goods multiplier. This was around 1.5 during the fifties and went on rising till it reached 2.4 during 1990–97. It is this rise that explains why the growth rates are higher during the recent period than during the earlier period.

The index of agricultural production over the entire period has been increasing at 2.63 per cent per annum. The highest growth rate was during the fifties at 3.44 per cent per annum. The eighties witnessed 3.3 per cent per

Graph 4
Ratios of Gross Capital Formation and Gross Domestic Savings to GDP at Current Market Prices



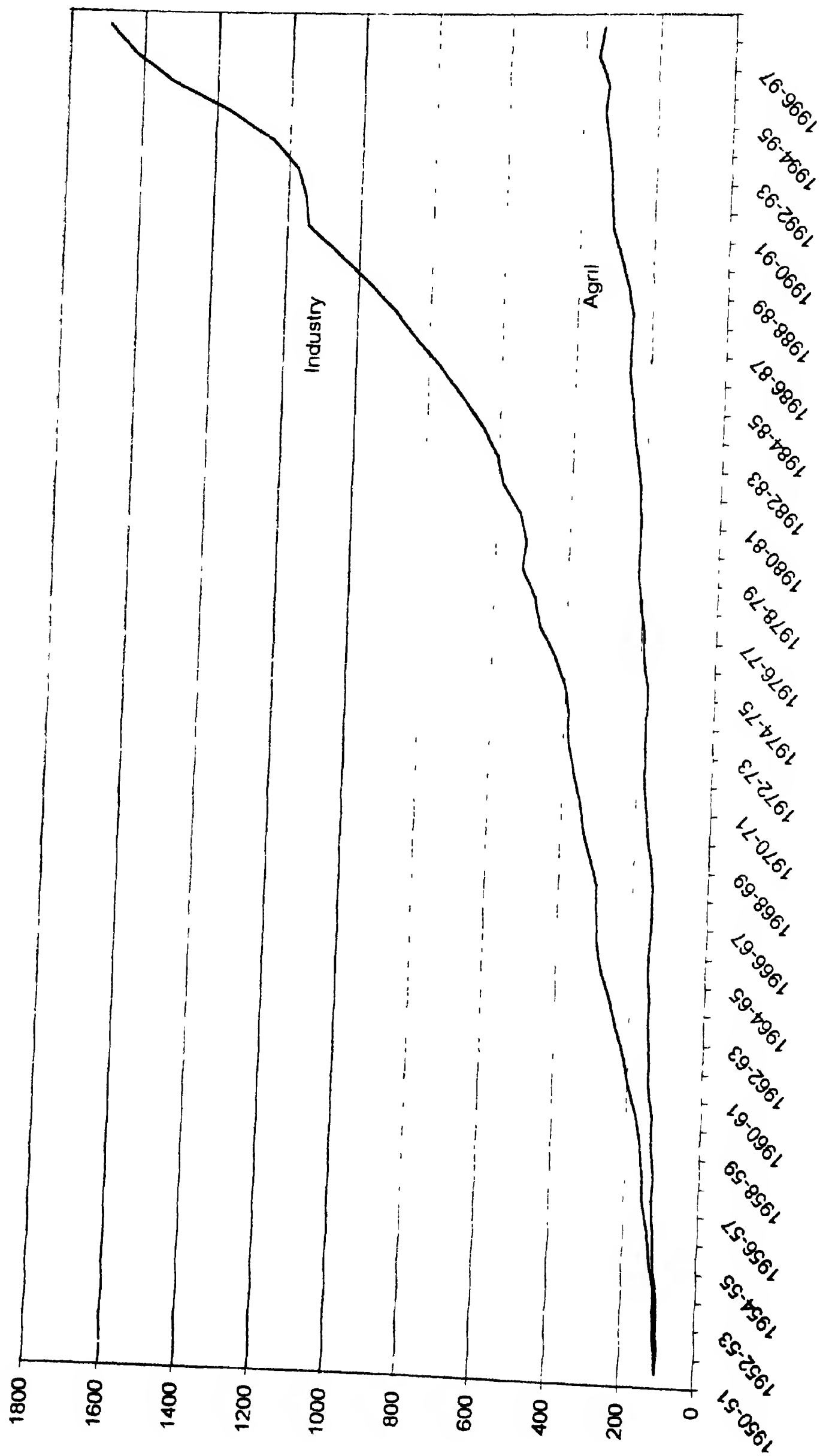
annum. During 1990–97, the agricultural growth rate was just 2 per cent per annum, less than the long period growth rate.

The index of industrial production over the entire period has been growing at 7.79 per cent per annum, whereas that of electricity 9.28 per cent per annum. The eighties witnessed the highest growth rate of industrial production, an average of 7.6 per cent per annum. It is interesting to note that during the period 1990–97, the industrial index was growing at 6.3 per cent whereas electricity was growing at 6.44 per cent. The gap in the growth rates between the two has been closing. Mining and quarrying had a growth rate of 5.12 per cent over the whole period. But, during 1990–97, it was lower at 3.97 per cent.

In general, both in agriculture including food and industry, electricity, mining etc., the growth rate during 1990–97 has been lower than the long period growth rate over the fifty years. But, as 1990–97 has witnessed a higher overall growth rate than the long-period, the explanation has to be sought in the higher growth rate of the services sector during this period as compared to the long-period of fifty years. What is sustaining the higher growth rate currently are not the commodities but, services. In the last category, the growth rate has been significant in banking and financial services, telecommunications and non-railway transport. The real incomes in the services sector including the Government services have been going up at a higher rate than in the other sectors. How long this can be sustained is a big question. For this increases the disparity between wages/incomes in the organised services sectors as compared to those in the other sectors. Without significant growth rate in commodities, this process cannot be sustained and will involve forced transfers from those working in industrial and agriculture.

Narrow money consisting of currency and bank deposits with the public has been growing over the entire period at a rate of 10.93 per cent per annum. This is

Graph 5
Indices of Agricultural and Industrial Production

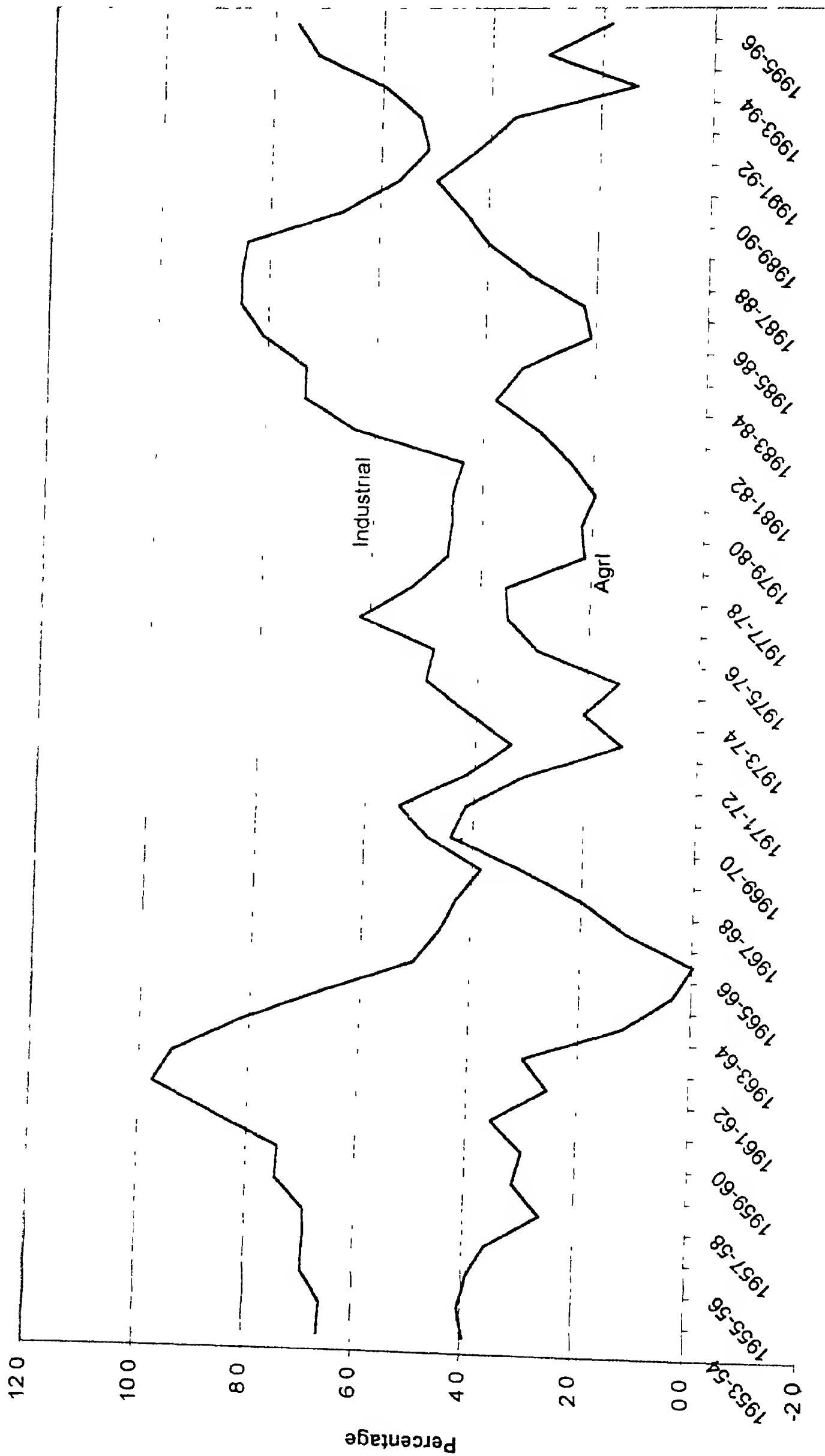


substantially higher than the growth rate of 4.38 per cent per annum in the fifties. During the period 1990–97, the annual growth rate of MI was 15.29 per cent per annum. MI over the long period had a lower growth rate than during the post-nineties period. This is the primary reason why the inflation rate has risen. The wholesale price index for the entire period has been increasing at an annual rate of 7.09 per cent, during the fifties it increased at an annual rate of 1.21 per cent, during the sixties at 6.88 per cent, during the seventies at 8.74 per cent and during the eighties at 6.86 per cent per annum. During 1990–97, the annual rate of increase in prices was 8.43 per cent per annum. Thus, during the nineties prices have been rising at a higher rate than over the fifty year period. The income velocity of MI surprisingly has been generally hovering between 4 to 5 during the fifty years period. Currently, it is around 4.5. Why despite a rise in the proportion of bank deposits to currency, income velocity should not be going up secularly is an issue which is puzzling.

The bank rate was 3 per cent in 1950–51. Currently, it is 9 per cent, close to the rate at which prices are rising. The one year deposit rate was between 1.6 to 2 during the fifties. Currently, it is between 9 to 10 per cent in general, interest rates have risen over the period. But, currently they are not compensating fully for the expected rate of inflation. Consequently, the real rates which were going up early, seem to have come down, well below the growth rate. This would be adversely affecting domestic savings.

Foreign exchange reserves were around 2 billion dollars in 1950–51. They came down to 0.6 billion dollars in early 1966. The devaluation occurred thereafter. The reserves are currently around 29 billion dollars. But a good portion consists of foreign financial inflows, global depository receipts, non-resident deposits, etc. Except during the late seventies, the trade balance has been a deficit, more so the current balance.

Graph 6
Sequential 5 yearly Averages of Annual Growth rates of Agricultural and Industrial Outputs

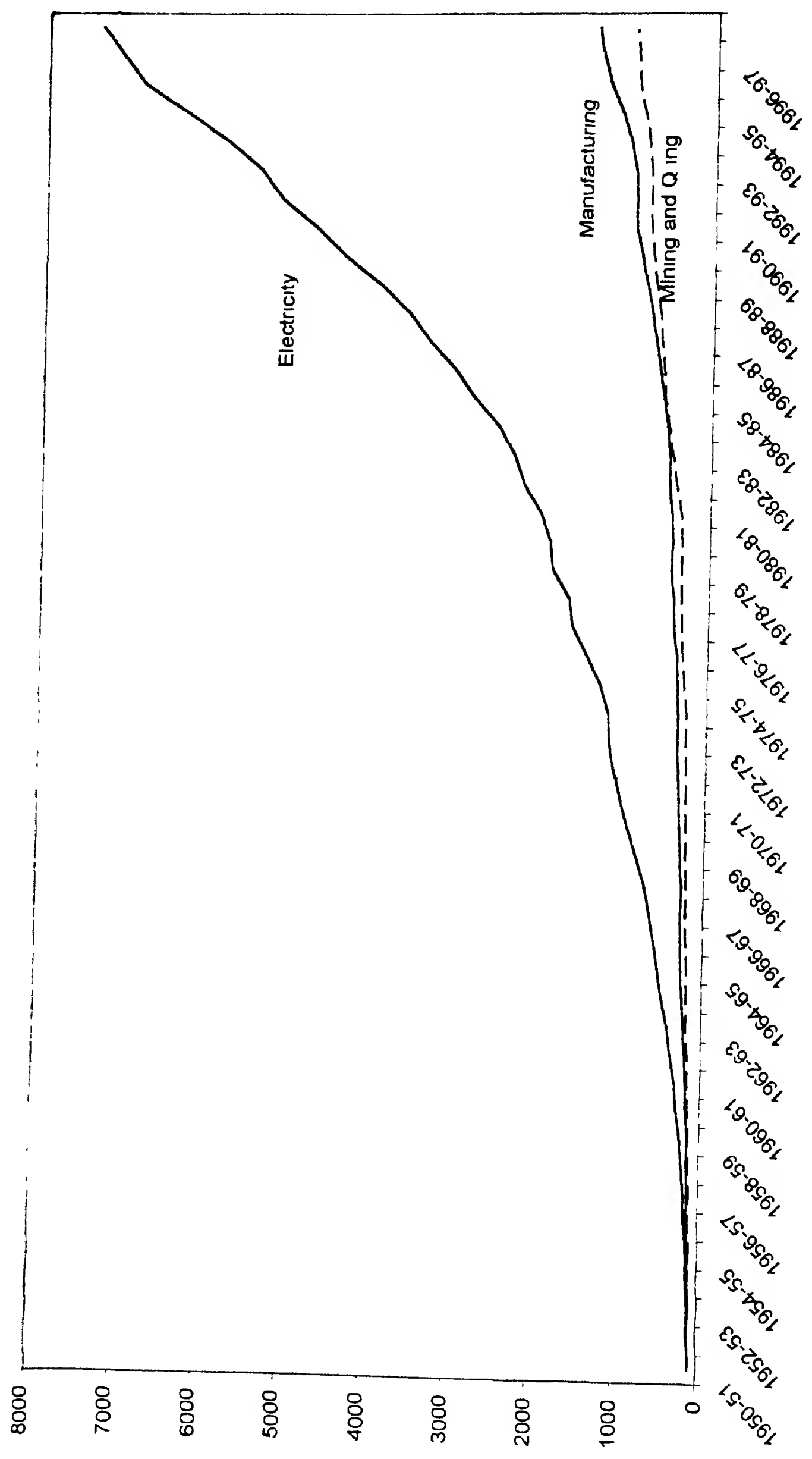


The fiscal situation witnessed largely surpluses on the revenue account and deficit on the capital account, till around early eighties. Thereafter, revenue deficits have emerged and they constitute currently 3 per cent of GDP. In the earlier years, tax rates on income went up marginally to more than 100 per cent. The exemption limits were quite low. The authorities rightly wanted an austere regime in respect of consumption and income disparities. But, this philosophy has changed after the mid-eighties. Tax rates are being heavily brought down and conspicuous consumption is consciously being encouraged. The tax coverage is being sought to be extended. The middle and upper income classes have substantial incomes exempted from direct taxation.

What has been the effect of development efforts on poverty? In 1951–52, according to World Bank estimates, at the Lakhdawala measure of poverty, about 47 per cent of rural population was poor. This seems to have increased with ups and down to 64 per cent in the 1966–67. It was about 51 per cent in 1977–78. In 1993–94, it had come down to about 37 per cent. Urban poverty (the proportion of urban poor) was about 35 per cent in 1951–52. It went on moving up and was around 52 per cent in 1966–67. Thereafter, it has been generally going down and in 1993–94 was about 31 per cent. For the country as a whole, the poverty proportion was about 45 per cent in 1951–52. It went up to 62 per cent by 1966–67 and was around 54 per cent in 1973–74. It has since been going down and was about 35 per cent in 1993–94. These figures are subject to limitations, but there is a general consensus that after the mid and late seventies, the poverty proportion has been generally going down. Since the income growth rates have been higher during this period and population growth rates lower than earlier, probably the improvement in per capita income growth rate has also been associated with a reduction in the poverty proportion.

On a rough basis, probably between 35 to 40 per cent of population, specially in the states of Maharashtra,

Graph 7
Indices of Production in Mining and Quarrying, Manufacturing and Electricity



Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu have seen a doubling of per capita real income over the entire period. In some of the states, more than doubling has occurred. In Kerala, the improvement in per capita income is due to sustained remittance in flows. A remarkable aspect of development is the entry of West Bengal in better than average growth of food production due to the Green Revolution. But, most states other than Punjab, Haryana and UP have been going down in the race between population growth and food growth. The public distribution system depends heavily on these states.

It is hoped that in the years to come both per capita income growth and per capita consumption growth will proceed at higher rates than hitherto. Growth and development have to encompass large portions of UP, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and the North-Eastern States. For this to occur, the birth rate reductions in these states must be speeded up and law and order as well as political stability must prevail, specially in UP and Bihar. These states must be in a position to attract more capital and enterprise than before. For the economy as a whole, foreign capital inflows are very necessary both in capital and technology. At the same time, domestic savings must be increased. The capital and finance markets have become more free around the current period than they were earlier. But, the labour markets have not yet become fully mobile and free. There are non-economic barriers against this.

The most important issue is political stability and a certainty climate regarding economic matters. At the same time, in many metropolitan cities, civil society is breaking down for various reasons. Unless civil society remains strong and disputes are settled peacefully, and citizens are safe in economic transactions, the future is grim. □

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WHITHER INDIAN ECONOMY?

D H Pai Panandiker

In the past fifty years, we covered a lot of ground. Among the first countries that gained freedom from colonial rule, India had to establish the right institutions that would germinate the seeds of development. It was important that economic progress had to be high and shared by all sections of society. Equally important, it had to be achieved within a democratic framework. This was a challenge and an opportunity. It was a new experiment that the country had embarked on. That experiment is not complete and has gone through a number of changes. Now, finally, India seems to have succeeded in combining growth and democracy in good measure.

When India became independent, the per capita income at today's prices was a mere Rs.4,000 a year. Organized industry has surfaced but was small both in size and coverage. The main products were textiles, sugar, cement and steel and the total employment only about 1 million. These industries had sprouted in a hostile environment and speak of the indomitable entrepreneurial spirit of Indian business. Infrastructure was absolutely underdeveloped. When the first steel mill was put up at Jamshedpur, the machinery had to be carried to location on elephant back.

The development tasks were large and the private sector was not quite prepared to take on the full responsibility. It was inevitable for the Government to step in, particularly in infrastructure. The Planning Commission was established to draw up development programmes for

both the public and private sectors and a system of controls established to ensure that development takes the direction indicated. Absentee landlordism was abolished in agriculture, land ceilings were imposed, landownership was bestowed on the tiller. Industrial licensing was introduced which made it necessary for private sector to get Government approval before an industry could be set up. Imports were regulated, foreign exchange was rationed and prices were controlled.

Democratic planning was not an exclusively Indian model. It was almost a universally accepted way of directing development in the fifties and the sixties. Plans and controls were looked upon as a short cut to high growth and better distribution of income. Many countries in Asia, Europe and Africa adopted this model as the ideal way to progress. Government participation in development was high and its share in national investment generally exceeded 50 per cent.

The concern of the Indian Government, in adopting plans and regulations, was to engineer the kind of development which would alleviate poverty. Much of this poverty was in the rural areas among the landless workers. Through a variety of employment and welfare schemes each successive Government sought to improve the lot of weaker sections. Although large amounts of budgetary resources were spent year after year, poverty has continued to remain the main item on the political agenda.

The plans were not without results. Large dams were built by Government to provide irrigation and generate power; capital heavy industries for steel, fertilizers, oil and gas came into being. Roads and rails were extended, more telephone exchanges were set up and port facilities were enlarged. Private sector was largely confined to agriculture and, in industry, to consumer goods. With the protection given to industry progress was rapid. At least for a while the system seemed to deliver the goods.

By the middle of the seventies almost every type of industry came to be set up though quality of goods was poor and prices high. Industrial production increased four

times in 25 years, employment touched 5 million and food grains production 120 million tonnes. The country became self sufficient in food and the Food Corporation of India built enough buffer stocks to even out fluctuations due to vagaries of the monsoons. Per capita income crossed Rs.5800, about 45 per cent more than in 1950.

The rate of growth was more than doubled from 1.5 per cent before Independence to 3.5 per cent per year in the two and a half decades after Independence. That may look like good performance in relation to the past. But in comparison with the performance of other countries, India was left far behind. South Korea started development at nearly the same level of per capita income. But by 1975 South Korea's per capita income was 4 times India's. The Indian model of development did not give the best economic results though it needs to be appreciated that these were achieved, unlike in many other countries, within a democratic system.

This was the time to change track. Many countries did. That was because controls and regulations handicapped business and prevented them from participating in international trade. Many countries, which had gone in for centralized planning, gave it up and opened their economies. Partly it was because official aid had shrunk and private foreign investment was growing. Most countries even reversed government participation in business by privatizing public sector enterprises. South East Asia opened up; South Korea opened up; Latin American countries opened up; even China opened up. That attracted foreign investment which drove up the rate of growth in these countries.

India stuck on to its model in spite of the diminishing returns that model yielded. In the seventies and the eighties, the economy moved with the brakes on. Industrial growth slowed down though agriculture, after the green revolution, produced good results. Foreign investment which was not very significant almost disappeared. The country depended on assistance from the World Bank and in the latter half of the eighties on commercial loans.

In spite of the adjustments that were made to the exchange rate, the rupee remained over-valued and exports slowed down. Our share in world trade dropped to less than 0.5 per cent. The seeds of a crisis were planted and by 1991 the foreign exchange reserves dropped to less than \$1 billion. The RBI had to ship out gold to avoid default.

That was the beginning of a new development phase with policies designed to globalize Indian economy. Extensive reforms were undertaken to bring back the market and expand the role of the private sector. Infrastructure, which was the monopoly of government, was opened to private enterprise. The rupee was devalued and export incentives knocked off. Industrial licensing which had acted as a mill round the neck of industry was removed. Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) which put restrictions on size of business houses was confined to restrictive practices. Approvals to foreign investment in 35 groups of industries were made automatic up to 51 per cent of equity capital. Licensing was abandoned in respect of import of capital goods, components and raw materials. Tariffs were substantially brought down. The rupee was made convertible on current account. Greater autonomy was given to banks, mutual funds, non-banking financial companies and they were made to conform to prudential norms. Interest rates which were severely controlled are now market driven. Fiscal deficit became a policy target to be aimed at. Tax rates were cut and government was made to borrow at the market rate of interest.

Reforms were not a mere change in policy; they brought about a complete transformation of the economic system. A government driven economy became market driven. That put Indian enterprises, which were operating in a protected market, on the mat. Competition came from imports; competition came from MNCs that were attracted to India because of the large market and the relatively free entry. They used better technology, were better managed and consequently became bitter competitors. That alone forced Indian business houses to restructure themselves.

Anticipating the consequences many business houses got on the job right from 1992.

The results were astounding. After the initial period of adjustment, growth picked up. From 1994 the economy has been cruising at more than 7 per cent per year. This rate of growth continued for three years creating enough confidence that it can be sustained. Industry, which was dragging its feet, began to gallop and reached a growth rate of 13 per cent within 5 years. In spite of the opening of the economy, the rate of business bankruptcies did not rise. It was because simultaneously, the rupee depreciated giving enough protection to domestic industry. The depreciation of the rupee also gave a shot in the arm to exports which increased at more than 20 per cent per year.

It is obvious that the reforms that have already been introduced have brought about dramatic changes. The consumer is offered a wider choice, better quality and lower prices. Take, for instance, cars. Only three companies with limited capacities were in the market, each one with an allocated share. After reforms, 8 more companies rushed in to produce a variety of vehicles, from small cars like Maruti or Fiat to luxury cars like Mercedes Benz. The buyers' market had returned and the consumer was pampered.

The wind of competition have forced business houses to restructure themselves and restrict to core competencies. This enables specialization which is critical for success. In the process, business houses had to sell off companies which did not belong to the core area and acquire companies that did. In cement, where the economies of scale are more pronounced, this phenomenon is visible with very dramatic consequences. Such mergers and acquisitions, mostly friendly but some even hostile, will go on until companies are large enough to be internationally competitive.

Indian corporates have still a long road ahead before they become leaders in the international market because they suffer a major handicap. It is the continued dependence on imported technology that has held them back. Surely, for any country, technological self-sufficiency is out of question. There is not a single sector, however, in which

Indian industry wields the cutting edge of technology. In industries like textiles, tyres, cement, sugar, etc., Indian industry is almost at the technology frontier. But there is complete lack of innovation because of virtual absence of investment in R&D. At least the 50 large business houses should invest more than 5 per cent of their turnover on research and development. Once the barrier is broken, these business houses can become the Indian multinationals of the future.

Agriculture has faltered. Green revolution almost petered out and no new technology took its place. For one, reforms which were extensively introduced in industry escaped agriculture altogether. In the nineties, the rate of growth of food grains production was less than 2 per cent, on an average, just enough to feed the increase in population. In non-food crops, productivity improvement was a little better. Sugar output reached an all time high and India became the world's largest producer. So also of milk.

By 1994, there were firm indications that the country was set to achieve the kind of growth the Asian tigers had proved was possible. There was increasing interest by foreign investors and the inflow of foreign direct investment crossed \$3.2 billion in 1997. Even this investment was less than one-tenth of what China received and it is quite possible that in the years ahead the inflow will substantially expand. Apart from foreign direct investment, there is considerable portfolio investment by foreign institutional investors, issues of shares by Indian companies in markets abroad, and external commercial borrowings. All these helped build up the foreign exchange reserves which, in August this year, crossed \$ 27 billion or about 7 months' import bill.

The economy was all set to move at the tiger-pace when very serious interventions came. The Asian crisis which put the clock back by 5 years for the ASEAN and South Korea also hit the rest of the world. Japan ran into recession since the beginning of 1998 and US and Europe slowed down. By August, Russia, an important trading partner, went almost bankrupt. India could not escape the heat of this world crisis and there was a sharp fall in

export growth. From 20 per cent in 1996, export growth became negative in 1998. That was one reason for the fall in the rate of growth of industrial production. The other was a drop in public sector investment which could not be completely made up by the private sector. These together slowed down industry and consequently pushed down GDP growth to 5.2 per cent in 1997. There may not be much improvement in the current year either.

That, however, is a passing phenomenon. No Government will survive if the expectations of the people which are now quite high are not fulfilled. It is for this reason at least that reforms will be carried forward. Government has promised to get out of business creating new opportunities for the private sector. Reforms, in future, will have to have two objectives. First, the economy will open up further. Foreign investment will be permitted in more industries with higher participation. Tariffs on imports will be reduced. Second, to ensure that domestic industry does not encounter difficulties in international competition, the restrictions which came in the way of business efficiency will be removed. Even the developed countries continuously review their laws to ascertain whether these come in the way of efficiency and modify them if they do. Development to be healthy should be based on efficiency not protection.

More than industry it is agriculture where reform have become absolutely essential. Green revolution took more than two decades to cover the major production areas. It has now reached a plateau. No wonder that there has hardly been any improvement in productivity in the nineties. Reforms need to take two directions. First, induction of bio-technology on a large scale and organizational restructuring with a view to improve management. Perhaps, corporate form of management will enable agriculture to adopt the most scientific methods of production and make the country a granary for the world market. It should not be difficult for agriculture to grow at about 4 per cent per year.

Even so, the share of agriculture in GDP will shrink and of industry rise. That is because with the increase

in income a large proportion of family budget is spent on industrial goods and less on food articles. In the past 50 years, for instance, the share of agriculture decline from 50 to 29 per cent and of industry rose from 15 to 30 per cent. This trend will continue in future and quite likely, in the next twenty years, the share of industry will go up to 40 per cent and of agriculture drop to 20 per cent. Similar things happened in most countries of South East Asia.

In the next two decades, Indian economy is likely to grow at the rate of about 7–8 per cent per year taking the per capita income to Rs. 45,000 at today's prices by the year 2020. Agricultural production will increase at 4 per cent. Food grains output will cross 400 million tonnes. This will be much more than the needs of domestic consumption and will enable export of a variety of food products. Industry will grow at nearly 14–15 per cent per year. With that, the value of industrial production by 2020 will be Rs. 200 trillion. India will be an industrial power comparable only to the US and China.

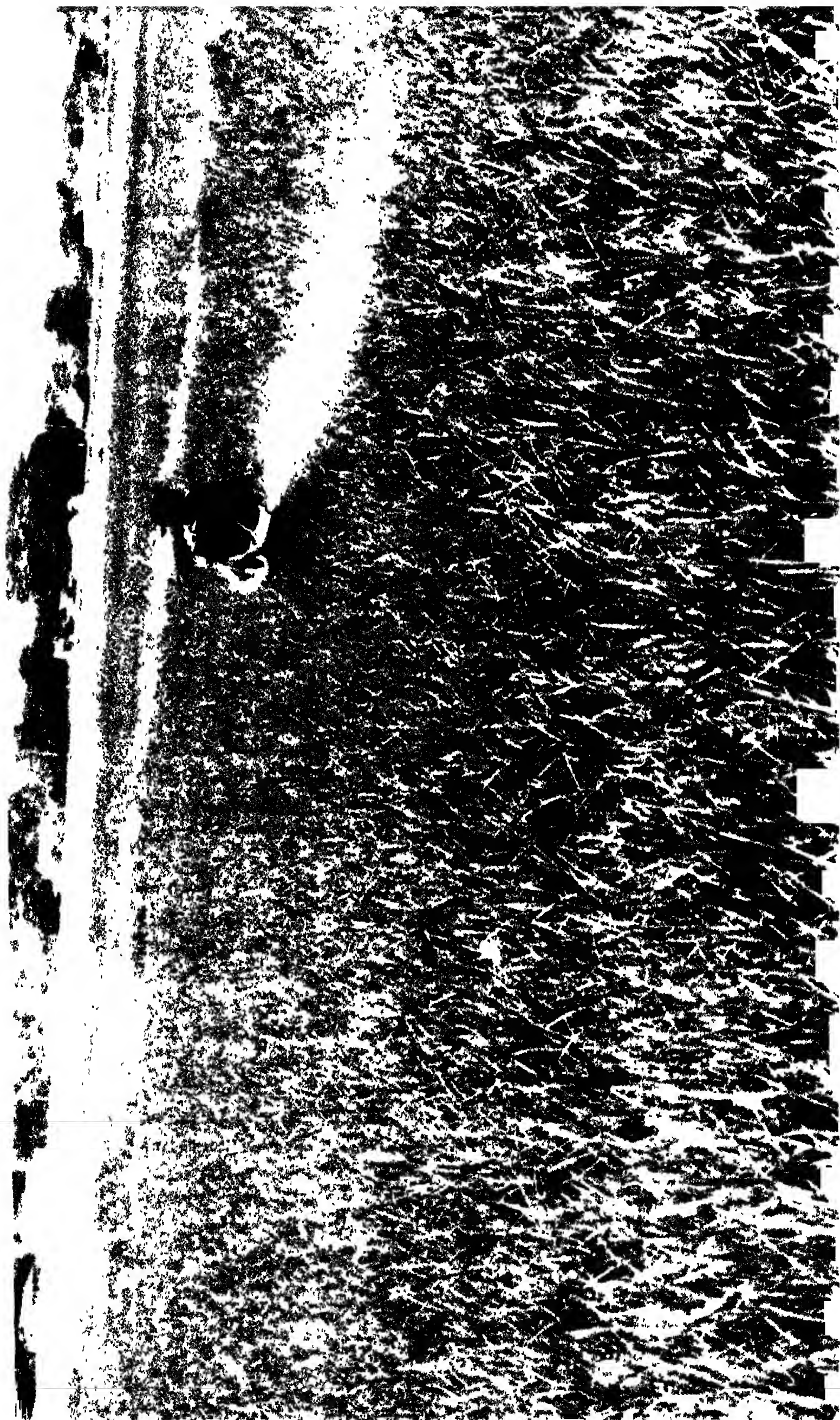
It is unthinkable that every industry will grow at the same pace. With the opening of economy, India will have to specialize in lines of production in which it has an advantage. That advantage comes from the endowment of natural resources, the skills of the people and location. A number of industries which produce bulk commodities like cement or steel will not lose their advantage. But, with the increase in incomes of the people, with the bulging middle class and the exponential expansion of the richer sections, there will be a dramatic change in consumption. More 'luxury' goods will be in demand than 'necessities'. It is no wonder that many car companies have already established themselves. The change in consumption pattern will mean that traditional industries like textiles, sugar, steel, fertilizers, etc. will lose their share in industrial output and sunrise industries like automobiles, electronic, computer software, domestic appliances, toiletries, pharmaceuticals, etc. will gain. The Indian companies of the future will be large, fairly independent, professionally managed with the

operations spread over Asia and Africa. The Indian variety of MNCs will be a visible segment of the international market.

The services sector is the most crucial. That is where the bulk of the foreign investment will come in. Power, telecommunications, road transport are capital heavy and the returns are slow to come. Domestic capital is shy to enter these areas because capital is inadequate and entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by quick returns. It is therefore quite likely that the infrastructure, in future, will be dominated by MNCs. The present policy is shaped recognising this reality.

Growth cannot be smooth though the Asian tigers enjoyed a perfect spell for a long time. The road to progress is not straight and, in a democratic system where different interests have to be reconciled, the pace may change from time to time. The direction has been set and almost every political party is committed to adopt reforms which will make the country a part of the global system. Governments that fail to deliver the goods will be changed by the people through the ballot and help the economy to prosper. People have realized that a rapid progress is possible. That alone will ensure that growth will be fast and high.

In the past fifty years the journey was slow. Democratic institutions survived and strengthened but economic progress could have been much faster. What helps the economy grow faster helps all sections of society to improve their lot. The focus should have been sharply on growth. Had we opened up in the seventies or at least early eighties India would have been a completely different place today. The change of perception did not come in time. Now that the Government has put a number of reforms in place, progress in the next two decades will be higher and wholesome. Possibly, India along with China, will replace South East Asia as the power house of world development.□



THE AGRICULTURAL SCENE

M S Swaminathan

Freedom from hunger: Gandhiji's priority number one for independent India:

Just prior to our Independence, undivided India witnessed one of the most serious famines of this century—the great Bengal famine. Gandhiji speaking in Noakhali in 1946 said, “to the hungry God is bread” and “it is the duty of independent India to ensure that every individual is enabled to earn his or her daily bread”. Gandhiji's emphasis was on *food for all with human dignity*. He did not want a nation of beggars or the entitlement to food being considered a charity. Thus, he asked us to desist from adopting a patronising approach towards the poor and hungry. Our first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru responded to this call and announced in 1948, “everything else can wait but not agriculture”.

We are now in the 50th year of our Independence. According to official statistics, about 200 million children, women and men will go to bed undernourished tonight. We have, however, successfully avoided famines during the last 50 years through a multipronged strategy consisting of (a) increased food production, (b) building grain reserves, (c) operating an extensive public distribution system, (d) protective social security measures like food for work, nutritious noon meal and employment guarantee; and (e) land reform and asset creation measures. The continued persistence of endemic hunger is now largely

the result of inadequate purchasing power arising from inadequate opportunities for skilled employment.

Famines were frequent towards the last part of the 19th century, when the combined population of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan was only 290 million. Our population alone is now more than thrice this number. Hence, we have every reason to be proud of the spectacular success of our Government's famine avoidance and containment strategy. The time is now ripe to take the final steps essential for the total elimination of hunger. Hunger elimination is easier to achieve than the eradication of extreme deprivation. The poor spend a large share of their daily income on food and hence the elimination of hunger is the first step towards the alleviation of poverty. The opportunity for a productive and healthy life for every individual depends very much on the success of our hunger elimination strategy.

Towards an Ever-Green Revolution in Agriculture

The term 'Green Revolution' was coined by Dr. William Gadd of USA in 1968, when our farmers brought about a quantum jump in wheat production by taking to semi-dwarf, non-lodging varieties with great enthusiasm and when similar progress appeared feasible in rice. Punjab took the lead because of the scientific and educational support given by the Punjab Agricultural University on the one hand and on the other, by the presence of essential pre-requisites for progress such as land consolidation and levelling, rural communication, rural electrification, and above all, owner cultivation.

Twenty eight years after the term 'Green Revolution' was coined, we are in a position to draw up a balance sheet and chalk out a strategy for the future. Apart from erasing the 'begging bowl' image of India, the most important gain has been the saving of forests and land, thanks to the rise in productivity, associated with high yielding varieties. This year, Indian farmers harvested about 68 million tonnes of wheat, as compared to 6 million tonnes at the time of our Independence in 1947. Punjab

farmers have raised the average yield of wheat to over 40 quintals per hectare. Likewise, Tamil Nadu farmers have raised the average yield of rice to over 50 quintals per hectare. If the yield improvement associated with the Green Revolution in wheat and rice had not taken place, we would need another 80 million hectares to produce the wheat and rice we now harvest. Thus, the productivity improvement associated with the Green Revolution is best described as forest and land saving agriculture. Such productivity improvement has taken place not only in wheat and rice but also in milk, eggs and fish. Only in the case of pulses, we are lagging behind.

The population of India is growing at the rate of 1.8 per cent per year. If this trend continues, our population will double itself in less than 40 years. Only Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Mizoram have so far achieved a demographic transition to low birth and death rates. Andhra Pradesh is now on the verge of achieving the goal of population stabilization. Besides population, increase in the purchasing power of the poor will also raise the demand for food, since under-nutrition and poverty go together. In contrast, the per capita availability of arable land is shrinking. Water use efficiency is still low and water disputes are growing. In addition to the gradual decline in per capita availability of arable land and irrigation water, various forms of economic constraints are spreading. There is still a widespread mismatch between production and post-harvest technologies. In perishable commodities like fruits, vegetables, flowers, meat and other animal products, this mismatch is often severe, affecting the interests of both producers and consumers.

The transition from a 'ship to mouth' existence to one of food self-sufficiency at the prevailing level of purchasing power achieved during the last 50 years is perhaps one of the greatest human accomplishments since the dawn of agriculture 10,000 years ago. Such a transition was achieved through integrated packages of technology, services and public policies.

Among public policy decisions, an important one relates to massive investment on irrigation. The gross irrigated area increased from 22.6 million hectares in 1950–51 to 66.1 million hectares in 1992–93. Much of the new irrigated area went to wheat and rice. Consequently, the contribution of wheat and rice to the increase in total food production, from 42.4 mt in 1950 to over 190 mt now, has been of the order of about 90 per cent. Crops like *jowar*, *bajra* and minor millets contributed only 5.5% of the increase in food production. The production of pulses has been practically stagnant and in *per capita* terms the availability of pulses has been going down. Pulses and millets are mostly grown without irrigation. Out of every 3 ha of cultivated land in our country, 2 ha are under rainfed agriculture, the total dryland area being 92.2 million ha out of a net cultivated area of 142.2 million ha. Even by the year 2013, when our irrigation potential is likely to be fully developed, farming on one out of every two ha will continue to rely upon rainfall for survival and success. Therefore, a very high priority should go in the coming years to improving the productivity and stability of rainfed agriculture. Rainfed areas generally receive an annual rainfall ranging between 500 and 1200 mm. If farm families living in a watershed work together, rainwater harvesting and management can be done in an efficient manner. If *Panchayati Raj* institutions give high priority to promoting community systems of water harvesting and sharing, we can improve the productivity of rainfed farming system very considerably. Unless there is equity in sharing water, there will be little cooperation in saving water. Rainfed farming technologies are site-specific and this is why planning and action have to be at the local level.

A major accomplishment of independent India is the development of a dynamic national agricultural research and education system. We have a well established network of State Agricultural and Animal Sciences Universities and national research institutions and coordinated research projects supported by the Indian

Council of Agricultural Research. Therefore, we have opportunities to produce food and other agricultural commodities, particularly fruits and vegetables, not only for our country but also for international markets. Our opportunities for exports will be particularly great, if industrialized countries reduce agricultural subsidies, thereby providing opportunities for developing countries to become cost-competitive in their agricultural exports.

Industrial countries are responsible for much of the global environmental problems such as potential changes in temperature, precipitation, sea level and incidence of ultraviolet-B radiation. While further agricultural intensification in industrialized countries will be ecologically disastrous, the failure to achieve agricultural intensification and diversification in our country where farming provides most of the jobs will be socially disastrous. Agriculture including crop and animal husbandry, forestry and agro-forestry, fisheries and agro-industries provided livelihoods to over 70 per cent of our population. The smaller the farm, the greater is the need for higher marketable surplus for increasing income. Eleven million new livelihoods will have to be created every year in India and these have to come largely from the farm and rural industries sectors. Importing food and other agricultural commodities will hence have the same impact as importing unemployment. Thus, what we need now is an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable Green Revolution or what may be termed as 'Ever-green Revolution'.

Those who advocate going back to the old methods of farming ignore the fact that just a century ago when the population of undivided India was 290 million, famines claimed 30 million lives between 1870 and 1900.

While famines have been prevented, widespread under-nutrition prevails among the economically underprivileged. Since non-food factors like health care, environmental hygiene and literacy play an important role in promoting sustainable food security at the level of the individual, we should redefine food security.

An Operational Definition Will Involve:

- a) that every individual has the physical, economic, social and environmental access to a balanced diet that includes the necessary macro and micro-nutrients, safe drinking water, sanitation, environmental hygiene, primary health care and education so as to lead a healthy and productive life.
- b) that food originates from efficient and environmentally benign production technologies that conserve and enhance the natural resource base of crops, animal husbandry, forestry, inland and marine fisheries.

Table 1
India's Share in the World Production & Area
for Major Crops, 1995-97

Crops	India's Share		India's Rank	
	Prodn	Area	Prodn.	Area
Wheat	11.4%	11.2%	2	2
Rice	21.4%	28.5%	2	1
Coarse Grains	3.4%	9.0%	5	3
Potatoes	6.2%	6.0%	5	5
Pulses	26.0%	36.6%	1	1
Groundnut	28.6%	35.2%	1	1
Sugarcane	22.6%	20.0%	2	2
Tea	28.3%	18.5%	1	2
Tobacco	8.3%	8.7%	3	2
Jute	52.5%	51.5%	1	1
Cotton (Lint)	14.0%	20.7%	3	1

Source: FAO, 1997

Because of the progress achieved in agriculture during the last 50 years (Table 1), we are now in a position to launch a national programme for eliminating hunger in all its aspects. Based on the experience gained from studies in Tamil Nadu, such a National Hunger Free Area Programme (NHFAP) should have the following seven components:

- (i) Identification of the ultra poor by the village/urban communities
- (ii) Information empowerment through a Household Entitlement Card containing information on the

- Government programmes available to the family differentiated according to gender and age
- (iii) Eliminating protein-calorie under-nutrition improving the delivery of the public distribution system
 - (iv) Eliminating silent hunger arising from micro-nutrient deficiencies through the identification of the missing element in the diet and ensuring their intake through the most feasible methods
 - (v) Improving the biological absorption and retention of food through the provision of safe drinking water and improved environmental hygiene
 - (vi) Improving the purchasing power of the ultra poor through economically viable micro-enterprises supported by micro-credit
 - (vii) Ensuring that the special programmes intended for women and children, particularly those related to work opportunities, reproductive health and the reduction of infant mortality rate reach the target groups.

Rural livelihoods can be strengthened only if linkages are established between primary producers and markets. The following are some of the approaches that can help to promote a symbiotic social contract between private and public sector industry and rural men and women.

1. Contract cultivation

The corporate sector instead of buying the land of small and marginal farmers thereby converting them into landless labour, should promote contract cultivation. This can be done in all crops, including medicinal plants, so that industry does not face difficulty in the sourcing of raw material. What we need is contract and not corporate farming. There are many valuable examples of this kind in the country, like in the case of tobacco and sugarcane.

2. Decentralised production supported by key centralised services

Small farmers have to gain the advantages of scale, particularly in marketing. Industry can help resource

poor farmers with a wide range of services. Some examples are:

- machinery for land preparation in rainfed areas in order to promote timely sowing;
- plant protection services such as those being provided by sugar factories in their catchment areas;
- organisation of seed villages;
- organisation of fodder and feed banks as well as immunization services for large and small ruminants;
- post-harvest technology, particularly for perishable commodities like fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat and milk such as cold storages and refrigerated vans; and
- packaging, forwarding and marketing.

Such services, if provided in a timely and cost-effective manner, will help small scale producers to increase their market surplus and receive a remunerative price for their produce.

3. Skill and information empowerment

To be cost competitive as well as to become environment-friendly, our farmers will have to adopt precision farming techniques. Ecological agriculture leads to the replacement of capital and chemical inputs with knowledge and farm-grown biological inputs. Skills are particularly needed in the area of value-addition to primary produce in villages. There are areas where private and public sector industry can extend a supporting hand.

4. Agri-business consortium for small scale producers

Small producers need access to agri-business enterprises, if they are to improve their income and livelihood security. It would be useful to form a consortium of industries at the district level to provide the needed support services, particularly in the area of post-harvest technology, to farm women and men who have organized themselves into activity based group. It will then be possible to extend the economic benefits of modern agri-business to small and marginal farmers.

In China, rural township enterprises have helped to link the farm and the factory in a mutually supportive manner. We need a similar movement in our country, designed to promote concurrently value-added on-farm and off-farm employment in rural areas. If this is accomplished, agriculture will become an engine of both economic growth and ecological and livelihood security.

5. Biodiversity conservation

Today there is an economic stake in the exploitation of biodiversity but not in conservation. An economic stake in conservation can be created if the tribal and rural families who not only conserve valuable plants but also add value to them through selection and information, receive economic benefit from their efforts. The Global Convention on Biological Diversity lays considerable stress on equity in sharing benefits. The private sector can play a catalytic role in this area, by recognizing and rewarding the contributions of the primary conservers. Government, on its part, should enact the following two pieces of legislation without further delay:

- Biodiversity (Conservation and Equitable Benefit Sharing) Act
- Plant Variety Protection and Farmers' Rights Act.

Thus, both voluntary and legal steps are needed to end the poverty of the conservers in contrast to the prosperity of those who utilise their knowledge and material.

Globally and nationally, there appears to exist seeds of discrimination against the poor. One billion people in the world earn over 85% of the world's annual income, while another billion live in extreme poverty and deprivation. Such a situation will only lead to social disintegration and chaos. The incorporation of equity principles in agricultural development and natural resources conservation and utilization will have the widest societal impact. We should lose no further time in promoting an agricultural growth strategy rooted in the principles of ecology, economics, gender and social equity and employment generation.

The National Agenda for Governance of the ruling coalition at the Centre has set up elimination of hunger within the next five years as one of its principal goals. If a horizontal dimension can be introduced to the numerous vertically structured government and voluntary sector programmes, achieving this goal will be feasible.

Opportunities for Indian agriculture to become a dynamic engine of economic growth and employment generation are great, thanks to the excellent scientific and developmental infrastructure we have created during the last 50 years. However, the challenges are equally great. Our country has today 16% of the world's human population, 15% of the world's livestock, but only 2% of world's geographical area, 1% of rainwater, 1% of forest and 0.5% of pasture land. Consequently, the stress on the population supporting capacity of natural ecosystems is very great. Current estimates on land degradation show that around 60% of our geographical area suffers from soil erosion, water logging and salinity. The biological potential of the soil of such degraded land needs to be upgraded through scientific methods. The Government of India has organized a national wasteland development programme for this purpose.

Two-thirds of the total 450 million heads of livestock thrive in rainfed regions. Rainfed areas can produce a wide range of fruits and animal products. We also have over 7500 kms of coast line and about 2.1 million sq.kms of exclusive economic zone in the ocean. To overcome constraints and capitalise on opportunities, we have to go back to Gandhiji's recipe of *Gram Swaraj*. The onset of democratic decentralization through *Panchayati Raj* institutions and the information age provides uncommon opportunities for India to become a major global agriculture power. The legacy of the past 50 years gives us confidence to overcome difficulties and realise Gandhiji's vision of a hunger free India in the early part of the coming millennium.

Uncommon opportunities for sustainable food security

The onward march of democratic forces, the onset of the information age and the spectacular progress in science and technology have created uncommon opportunities for India. Environment-friendly technologies are knowledge intensive and hence we should harness both the electronic and print media as well as computer technology for providing rural families with location-specific information on meteorological, management and marketing factors. This is essential for enabling farmers to adopt precision farming techniques involving the correct application of inputs at the correct time and in correct doses. For example, in the field of irrigation, we can move away from flow irrigation to sprinkler, drip and membrane irrigation. We can adopt plant scale husbandry rather than field scale management.

With a rapid reduction in the size of farm holdings, the Kerala model of group farming needs to be adapted in other states. The National Dairy Development Board has demonstrated the power of cooperatives in strengthening the income and livelihood of the rural poor. A small farm is ideal for intensive agriculture based on ecological techniques. A small farmer, however, suffers from many handicaps caused by the cost, risk and return structure of farming. It is only by helping the small farmer to overcome his/her handicaps, that the untapped production potential of a small farm can be realized. Unfortunately, such issues are receiving little attention.

It is now 30 years since the term 'Green Revolution' has been in use. 'Green' denotes chlorophyll which enables plants to harvest solar energy. Agriculture is the largest solar energy harvesting as well as private sector enterprise both in our country and in the world. The term 'Green Revolution' denotes agricultural progress through the improvement of productivity per unit of land, water and time. In the coming millennium, we will have no option except to produce more food and other agricultural commodities from diminishing per capita land and water

resources. This can be done only by blending the best in frontier science with the ecological wisdom of the past.

Our population is likely to range from 1.4 to 1.5 billion by 2050. It will be even higher if our population policies go wrong. Will it be possible for our farmers to produce over 300 million tonnes of food grains, assuming 1 ton will support five individuals, from less land and water? The answer is 'yes', provided appropriate technologies, services, farm management structures and public policies are introduced. We have to graduate from a mere 'Grow More Food' approach to farming for more income and employment in addition to more food. This will call for an end-to-end approach in agriculture, with special emphasis on assured and remunerative marketing opportunities. The private sector should help women and men operating small holdings through contract cultivation and should not attempt to buy their land and resort to corporate farming. Further increases in the number of families without productive assets in rural and urban areas will lead to increased social conflicts and disintegration.

Both home and external trade in farm commodities needs to be enlarged. Agricultural exports now earn about Rs.20,000 crores annually but this can be more than doubled in the next 5 years through value-addition to primary products, investment in infrastructure for perishable commodities like fruits, vegetables, flowers, milk and eggs and greater attention to the promotion of a green health movement. Our heritage in medicinal plants should be fully utilized and our vast coastal areas can be developed into 'Green Health Tourist Centres'. There are social opportunities for the production and marketing of organically grown foods and plantation crops. Such steps will help to create more on-farm and off-farm employment. □

AGRICULTURE: FUTURE CHALLENGES

Arabinda Ghose

The opening day of the 1998–99 budget session of Parliament was dominated by the issue of mass suicides of cotton farmers in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere. Again in June this year, reports of farmers committing suicides in agriculturally-rich states like Haryana and Punjab were appearing in national newspapers. The Economic Survey for 1997–98, a Government of India document, revealed that while the production of foodgrains in the country rose to 199.30 million tonnes (mt) in 1996–97, it fell to 194.10 mt in 1997–98, a shortfall of five mt, and if one were to take into account the target of 200 mt for the year, a shortfall of six mt. In addition, we have the fearful forebodings by Lester Brown and Hal Kane (1994) that India would be obliged to import 40 million tonnes of foodgrains every year in order to balance its food budget by the year 2030. They have made similar estimates about China.

Our own National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) has estimated that by the year 2025, the population of India would go up to 1.30 billion and it will require 300 million tonnes of foodgrains to feed this huge population. The National Agenda of the BJP-led coalition Government, now ruling at the Centre, promises to double the production of foodgrains in the next ten years. This means that by the year 2010, India will produce 400 million tonnes of foodgrains annually. At the same time, experts on water resources have predicted that some sort of water famine would manifest

itself sooner than expected, by the year 2007, only nine years from now.

This is the present-day agricultural and food security scenario in the country. The forecast made by Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) of a 'normal' monsoon between June and September this year, the eleventh in a row, was one positive signal in an otherwise disturbing scenario of suicides by cotton-growing farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra and acute distress faced by their counterparts in north Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana. We shall come to this a little later.

The biggest success story in independent India, to this writer's mind, is the Green Revolution of 1967–68. This is because in the early sixties, when India was leading a 'ship-to-mouth' existence with PL (Public Law) 480 wheat coming from the United States, economists like Paddock brothers of the United States had predicted that there was no way India could be saved and Indians would die like flies by the middle of the seventies. Precisely by the year, the Paddock Brothers had said that India would see fearful famines, the country had actually stopped import of foodgrains altogether. What is more, when in 1979 the monsoon failed and the country was hit by the worst drought of this century, India had built up a massive stock of 21.03 million tonnes of foodgrains and we had fought that drought without importing a single grain of wheat or other cereals.

Eternal vigilance is not only the price of liberty, but also of food security. No one put it more aptly than Dr. Norman Borlaug, the father of India's Green Revolution, when he said:

The Green Revolution had won a temporary success in man's war against hunger, which if fully implemented could provide sufficient food for humankind through the end of the 20th century. But I warned that unless the frightening power of human reproduction was

curbed, the success of the green revolution would only be ephemeral...¹

With the current population estimated at 970 to 980 millions, the 'frightening power of human reproduction' seems to be gaining an upper hand, if not in terms of physical access but certainly in terms of economic access to foodgrains. Let's face it. Millions of people including children go to bed hungry today even though foodgrains production in India has quadrupled from only about 51 million tonnes in 1950-51 to almost 200 million tonnes in 1996-97.

The 21st century will be a very different place than it has been so far. While this century has seen two great world wars, the second terminating with the dropping of nuclear bombs over Japan, the next century is unlikely, at least during the initial years, to be peaceful either. A third world war cannot be ruled out as of today, although a more dangerous war for the humankind, particularly for the people of the third world, is the emergence of neo-colonialism in the form of monopolies in production of seeds for high yielding and quality grains. Because of the new patent regime, on the one hand multiplication of such seeds in farmers' fields in India may not be possible, while on the other hand, new types of seeds called terminator seeds are making their appearance which would ensure that grains grown from such seeds cannot be used as the seed for the next crop. These grains will have no power of reproduction.

At the same time, the World Trade Organisation has made us open our frontiers to free imports of agricultural produce from the developed world. These produce will be so cheap that the local produce would be priced away and Indian agriculture perhaps faces the biggest threat on this score. Based on the premise that the world, after all, is a global village, hints have already been thrown that all countries need not produce all types of agricultural commodities. For example, how

about letting Canada grow all the wheat the third world countries require?

India has long ago declared this world to be a global village and has been telling the world that the world is a family, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. However, charity begins at home and let us first prepare ourselves for meeting the foodgrains needs of our people. In any case, we have already been providing succour, in a small way albeit, to countries in distress, mostly in our immediate neighbourhood in times of difficulties. We have, however, to keep in mind the projections by Lester Brown that India and China would require every year between themselves about 70 million tonnes of foodgrains, more than they would produce by 2030, and the world by then would just not have that amount of surplus anywhere. The biggest challenge before agriculture in India, therefore, is to survive as a self-reliant nation in the next century and prove Lester Brown and Hal Kane wrong as we had done in case of the Paddock Brothers in the mid-seventies.

At this point, it will be relevant to analyse why as many as 300 to 400 farmers of Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere growing cotton had to commit suicide. Almost all of them had taken huge loans from money-lenders or pesticide sellers for buying huge quantities of pesticides for combating the infestation of the insect *Spodoptera litura*, which usually attack the tobacco crop, also grown on a large scale in Andhra Pradesh. Lack of rainfall during the sowing period, sudden and very heavy rainfall in September-October and long periods of cloudy and sunless days had helped the infestation of this particular insect. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed a package of practices aimed at meeting such emergencies known as the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and there was no need for farmers to seek the advice and act according to the recommendations of pesticide sellers. However, ICAR does not have the mandate to take this technology to the farmers directly. Agriculture,

in the Constitution of India, is a State subject and it was for the State Governments concerned to take this technology to the farmers. This was not done and here is the challenge, a big challenge for agriculture in India.

Agriculture Extension had received a big boost prior to and during the Green Revolution with the Block Development Officer (BDO) being inseparable from his jeep. During later years, the 'always-on-the-move' BDOs and their staff appear to have become desk-bound, and one can trace the dominant cause for the suicide of the farmers growing cotton to this development. If the farmers were taught IPM by the Extension staff of the State Agricultural Department, excessive use of pesticides could have been avoided and along with it, the resultant indebtedness of the farmers to pesticide dealers and the suicides when the crops failed, leaving the farmers with no means to repay the loans.

During field visits in many parts of India, I have found that this phenomenon of field staff becoming desk bound has afflicted the agricultural sector in most States. There have been many interesting and innovative programmes such as the Training and Visit (T&V) system for agricultural extension. However, file work and bureaucratic approach have taken a heavy toll of the extension system.

It is doubtful if the old enthusiasm of the extension system can be revived. It is also not desirable to strengthen the system merely by recruiting additional hands. At the political level, perhaps, the system can be strengthened by contributions from voluntary agencies, students of agricultural colleges and universities, and certain existing agencies of the Government of India like the Directorate of Field Publicity under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The cardinal issue in ensuring food security in the next century is raising the productivity of our land. We are justifiably proud of our achievements during the Green Revolution. However, even then, India does not figure in the list of countries which have the highest per

hectare of productivity of cereals. The highest per hectare yield of wheat in the world is in Ireland, as high as 8997 kilograms. In respect of paddy, it is Puerto Rico, 8333 kgs/ha. Mexico has the highest per hectare yield of rapeseed (mustard) 11,111 kgs and in soyabeans, it is Italy with 3435 kgs.² Compared to these, the figures for India in 1996–97 were, 2671 kgs of wheat, 1879 kgs of paddy, 266 kgs of cotton and 931 kgs of oilseeds per hectare.³

Obviously, with land under cultivation shrinking every day, raising the per hectare yield of food grains, oilseeds, pulses and fibres becomes all the more important. A two-pronged strategy has to be adopted for this purpose. First, better management of the land, water, seeds and fertiliser resources in order to derive the maximum advantage from them. While in some districts of Punjab, the wheat yield has gone upto 6000 to 7000 kgs per hectare, it is not so in every district, nor has this kind of high productivity been recorded in Haryana or Western Uttar Pradesh. Secondly, irrigation. In rainfed areas, the situation is pathetic. Kalahandi in Orissa, the Bundelkhand region in Uttar and Madhya Pradesh, the interiors of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, not to speak of Rajasthan and Gujarat, are examples of this sort of situation. It is unlikely that all such areas will ever get any irrigation benefits because of the stark fact that there are no large sources of water in these areas. Water conservation by impounding all the water that falls in such areas, on a watershed basis, is a must for raising the productivity of land in these areas. Because, unless there is water, there is no use for fertilisers in these areas. It is a welcome move by the Government to unify all programmes of watershed development, spread across several ministries, and allocate a total of Rs.677 crores for those programmes in 1998–99. Apart from the more publicised Anna Hazare model of Ralegaon Siddhi in Maharashtra, there are other success stories too in this field, worthy of emulation.

In this connection, one would also like to point out that certain groups of people, including even those who are graduates or post-graduates in agriculture, have launched a crusade, as it were, against the application of what they call 'chemical' fertilisers. The villain of the piece in their eyes is urea which gives the all important nitrogen to the plants. Their complaint is that urea results in soil degradation which along with over-irrigation, renders the land infertile.

Their contention is right only to a certain extent. If no organic manure, or more technically speaking, Farmyard Manure (FYM) is applied to land along with urea and other formulations such as Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP), Muriate of Potash (MOP) and complex fertilisers containing the three major nutrients of Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P) and Potash (K from Latin Kalium) in varying proportions, then soil health will be affected.

The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) which conducted a workshop in Hyderabad in early 1997 to discuss the Fertiliser Policy Issues (2000–2025) observed that:

Firmly basing their perceptions on past experiences, scientists find that no country in the world has been able to increase agricultural productivity without expanding the use of fertilisers. Working on conservative, population forecast of 1.30 billion by the year 2025, India would need 30–35 million tonnes of NPK from fertiliser carriers in addition to the 10 million tonnes from organic and biofertiliser sources to produce the minimum foodgrains needs of 300 million tonnes.

Dr. Borlaug too has taken note of these movements and said:

Currently, extremists in the environmentalist movement, who have strong influence over

international financial institutions by way of lobbying, have convinced the authorities that there is no need for chemical fertiliser, and that organic fertiliser can meet crop needs for a stable food supply ... We cannot produce the food that the world needs with the use of organic fertilisers alone...⁴

In passing, one may add that while urea is certainly a chemical, so are the food we eat, the medicines we take, sugar, salt and even drinking water! So, here is another challenge.

We have so far dealt with only foodgrains, that too only paddy and wheat. India is woefully short in availability of pulses. The Green Revolution has not touched the pulse crop despite the fact that this country produces a bewildering variety of pulses. Everyone is aware why this has happened but there is still no major breakthrough in this sector of our foodgrains production.

In oilseeds too, India has lagged behind many other countries. The result has been import of edible oils, often crossing the one million tonne mark a year. The shortcoming here too is the poor productivity of oilseeds, even in cases of soyabean and mustard, in which good work has been done. Groundnut, the main oilseeds crop, is grown in many states, but Gujarat and in particular the Saurashtra region is the main producer. Here too, rainfall within a particular fortnight in September makes all the difference between a bumper crop and a disaster. We, therefore, have to tackle the issue of productivity of both, oilseeds and pulses, in a big way. Incidentally, one may mention here that in the case of mustard, bio-technology like tissue culture has resulted in production of seeds with higher yield. The Biotechnology Centre within the campus of the IARI, New Delhi, has developed and released certain varieties.

Crops like maize, sorghum (jowar), bajra (pearl millet), Ragi etc. are staple food of rural people in most states of western southern India. Hybridization of maize, the first such crop to come under this programme in India, has indeed given higher production. Of late, maize, traditionally grown during the *Kharif* (summer) season, has gained acceptability during the *Rabi* (winter) season too and in this, Bihar has achieved a great deal, particularly in the districts, north of the Ganga.

In jute, the golden fibre, India occupies a leading position, rivalled only by Bangladesh. However, in the case of jute and mesta, unremunerative prices are the bane of farmers.

We began this essay with the plight of the cotton farmers. It is ironical that this should happen in a country which had produced the first cotton hybrid in the world, the H-4 variety, released in 1970. It is interesting that the per hectare yield of cotton in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil nadu is the highest in the country, because of availability of irrigation to large areas under this crop. On the other hand the 'traditional' cotton growing areas of Khandesh and Berar (now the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra) which had attracted the British in the mid-19th century and for which the first railway line from Mumbai was extended towards these areas in the 1860s, have very poor productivity. This is mainly because of the lack of irrigation facilities. In any case, the Government has now announced its decision to set up a Technology Mission in Cotton on the lines of similar missions on oilseeds, pulses and drinking water.

We have mentioned the Green Revolution in agriculture a number of times. However, an equally scintillating success story is the White Revolution—the sensational breakthrough in milk production since the Operation Flood programme was launched in the early seventies. As of 1997–98, milk production has gone up to 70 million tonnes a year, up from a mere 21 million

tonnes in 1971. India is now the second largest producer of milk in the world with the United States leading the table. In terms of per capita availability of milk, however, we are still behind many countries. It will take us many more years to achieve this goal, of producing enough milk so that per capita availability of milk goes up to 220 to 230 grams a day from the present level of less than 200 grams a day.

On the horticultural front, India has achieved some breakthrough in exports, such as grapes from Maharashtra to the London market, now dominated by Chilean grapes. However, much more remains to be done in this sector.

India has done reasonably well in fisheries and poultry, but the scope in these sectors is endless, more so for exports.

During the last century and the beginning of the 20th century, India had suffered from frequent famines, often extending to large areas of undivided India. The British Government set up Famine Commissions in order to go into the causes and to suggest measures for preventing them. The recommendations of one such famine Commission resulted in the setting up of an agricultural research centre at a place called Pusa in the then Bengal Province, now in Samastipur district of Bihar, in 1905. With the active interest shown by Lord Curzon, himself a farmer in England, and with generous assistance from the Curzon family friend, Phipps from the United States, this Institute ultimately developed into what Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi is today.

From the initial years of IARI, after its re-location in New Delhi in the wake of the destruction of the Institute's building at Pusa in the 1934 earthquake, developed the Imperial (now Indian) Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) which is one of the largest agricultural research institutions in the world. It has under it 45 Institutes, four National Bureaux, ten Project Directorates, 30 National Research Centres, and 86 All

India Coordinated Research Projects. Four of its Institutes have been recognised as Deemed Universities which offer Degrees in various disciplines in Agriculture—the IARI in New Delhi; the Indian Dairy Research Institute, Karnal (Haryana); the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Izzatnagar, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh and the Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai.

Research is also conducted by the State Agricultural Universities, developed since the mid-sixties on the pattern of Land Grant schemes of the United States. Besides, a little less than 300 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) impart training to farmers at the grassroot level through the 'earn-while-learning' route.

This is a formidable list. However, the task before them is equally formidable. India has to produce not only 300 million tonnes of foodgrains a year by 2025 or even earlier from depleting land resources, but has also to hold its own against cheaper agricultural produce inundating the Indian market as an aftermath of the WTO agreement. The main problem, therefore, is to raise productivity without harming the environment and on a sustainable basis. This probably is the greatest challenge before Indian agriculture and Indian agricultural scientists. We may conclude with the remarks made in New Delhi a few days ago by Ismail Serageldin, one of the Vice-Presidents of the World Bank, and head of the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) system of the FAO. Delivering the keynote address at a two-day meeting on 'Scientific Perception for Agriculture—2020' organized by the National Academy of Agriculture Sciences, he said:

A doubly green revolution is needed to feed the 500 million expected addition to India's population in the coming two decades. □

Notes

- 1.&4. Dr. Borlaug's speech at the 34th Convocation of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, IARI, on February 9, 1966)
2. Lok Sabha unstarred Question No 1224, June 3, 1998
3. Question No 1221, June 3, 1998 in the Lok Sabha.

THE COOPERAIVE MOVEMENT: FIFTY YEARS WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE

V Kurien

The Indian Cooperative Movement is now well over a century old. While the conventional history of cooperatives in India begins with the colonial govenrment's Cooperative Societies Act of 1904, the idea of cooperation extends back throughout our history. The traditional *panchayats* that were found in most of India involved cooperation in most areas of life. At sowing and harvest times, our farmers have always cooperated with one another. We have cooperated in building places of worship, in creating educational institutions, in providing common services for the benefit of the community. In all these areas, our people have followed the same principle of mutual self-help which is the fundamental to all cooperatives.

It is worth pointing out that even formal, organized cooperatives pre-dated the first colonial cooperative act. One cooperative founded in the late 1800s, *Anyonya Sahakari Mandali Cooperative Bank Limited*, continues to thrive, serving its members for more than one-hundred years after it was set up. There are other cooperatives, organized in the early days of the present century, that are still vibrant enterprises, growing from strength to strength.

What is a Cooperative?

In reviewing cooperation in the fifty years since Independence, it is important to be clear about what a

cooperative is, and is not. This might be self-evident in some parts of the world, but not in all. In the days since the Rochdale weavers, Reiffeissen and other pioneers, a number of twists and turns have taken place so that for many, including many in India, there is considerable misunderstanding about what a cooperative really is. First, and foremost, a cooperative is an economic enterprise based on mutual self-help. Cooperatives operate on the basis of fundamental principles and, while the phrasing of these may differ modestly from place to place and time to time, they are, in essence, common to all genuine cooperatives:

First, cooperatives are based on open and voluntary participation. This means that cooperatives are open to all who want and need them, and who are willing to accept their responsibilities as members. It means that no one can be denied membership in a cooperative on the basis of caste, community, religion, language, gender or other artificial distinctions. Of course a cooperative may deny membership to individuals of poor character, to those who cannot use its services, and, if the cooperative is operating to capacity and cannot serve new members, then new applicants can be refused.

Second, cooperatives operate on the basis of democratic control. The members are the owners of the cooperatives and they vote on the basis of one member—one vote principle. This is quite different from investor-owned business where more the shares an individual holds, the more votes he can cast.

Third, cooperatives do not accord privilege to capital. Shares in a capital are not intended to produce handsome dividends or appreciate in value so that they may be sold at profit. Rather, members invest in the equity of a cooperative to build a business that they will benefit from through their patronage. Therefore, dividends on shares are limited, and there is no relationship between investment and voting power.

Fourth, cooperatives believe in the principle of equitable returns. This means that the members' share

in profits—and losses—is based on their patronage. If there is a net surplus of Rs.1 crore, and an individual has accounted for five per cent of the cooperative business, then that individual would be entitled to Rs.5 lakhs as a patronage bonus. It is also acceptable for cooperatives to invest surplus in building capacities that will benefit members on the basis of their patronage. And more importantly, if a cooperative loses money, then the members should meet those losses in proportion to their patronage of the cooperative.

Fifth, cooperatives are committed to education of their members, leaders, employees and the general public in the principles and techniques of cooperation. This means that every cooperative should ensure that it invests money and manpower in ongoing education. Cooperation is not an easy concept—it often involves the sacrifice of short-term gains for long-term benefits—so education of members, both new and old, is important to success.

Sixth, cooperatives try to cooperate with each other, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. This cooperation can be economic, social or even political.

Seventh, cooperatives are grounded in an abhorrence of exploitation whether of man by man or of the environment by man. Therefore they contribute to sustaining the quality of life in their communities and their world.

If an organisation follows these principles, we can fairly say that it is a cooperative. Where these principles are observed in the breach, then an organization may claim to be a cooperative but, in fact, it is something else.

Pre-Independence Cooperatives

At the turn of this century, when the colonial rulers of India became concerned about peasant riots against money lenders, fearing that this unrest might turn into hostile attention to the 'Raj', a commission of English gentlemen decided that the best thing would be to organize cooperatives that would lend money to the peasants, thus keeping them from raising arms against

their rulers. This led to a series of cooperative acts during the colonial era. These acts expanded the nature of economic activity that could be the subject of cooperation, devolved regulatory power from the Central to Presidency Governments, and gradually built in a series of provisions to ensure that the cooperatives and their leaders were kept under a tight control.

The major mechanism for enforcing control on cooperatives was the office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies. This was, almost invariably, held by an officer of the Indian Civil Service, seldom Indian, hardly civil and almost never of service. This Registrar—an office which did not exist for cooperatives in England—was to be the ‘Friend, Philosopher and Guide’ for cooperatives. In other words, he was empowered both to create and to destroy and, if his friendship and philosophy failed to keep things in good order, then he guided the cooperatives through direct intervention in its affairs. He could remove a board, change a society’s byelaws, and dissolve the cooperative irrespective of the member’s wishes. If you reflect back for a moment on what a cooperative is, and is not, you would have to agree that over-regulation threatens the very basis of democratic member control.

After Independence

Fifty years ago, the newly-formed Government of independent India had a marvelous opportunity to replace the archaic, colonial cooperative laws with a new Cooperative Societies Act that would reflect the true genius of our people. Such an Act would have recognized that cooperative societies are economic enterprises of their members and, if they are in control of those enterprises, then they will take some interest in ensuring that they serve their needs. Unfortunately, our bureaucrats and politicians discovered that with respect to cooperatives, the Registrar was god and, being god was not such a bad thing. The politician discovered that being the boss of the god was even better. And so, rather than reforming and liberalizing cooperative laws and regulations, it was

amended and emended and corrected in ways that tightened, rather than loosened, the control exercised by Government.

On the other side of the coin, the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, understood that cooperatives could be good for India. He spoke often and eloquently about the need to encourage cooperatives. One speech of the late Prime Minister is worth quoting. In *Cooperation and the Mind of the Villager*, Nehru wrote:

My outlook is to convulse India with the cooperative movement. I do not accept the statement often made, that the Indian peasant is so frightfully conservative that you cannot make him come out of (his) rut. He is a very intelligent person, given the chance—only a little cautious, only wanting some proof, some evidence of what he is asked to do... and not taking too much for granted. Now that is what makes cooperation in India for rural people absolutely essential... Our whole mental approach was for a Constitution and a living structure of society to be built on this approach and these principles of cooperation... Therefore, the whole future of India really depends on the success of this approach of ours... That is why we do not want, as in the past, the district official or any other official, to throw his weight about too much... We want to draw the mind of the people out of the old conception of some big officials sitting on top and ordering about people to do things... Theirs will be the decision and if they make mistakes, they will suffer for them, and learn from them.

One wishes that his own officials and those that followed had listened to Pandit Nehru. However, instead of recognizing that the essence of cooperation was mutual self-help and that those cooperatives were best that served the need of their members, thereby serving the

larger community and the nation, cooperatives soon came to be seen as 'vehicles' for government programmes. When it is a vehicle for government, it doesn't take a nuclear physicist to figure out who will drive that vehicle. Certainly not the members of the cooperative.

In 1955 occurred a watershed in the history of Indian cooperative movement—a rural credit survey that examined the problems of rural producers. The authors of the survey report concluded that cooperatives had failed and that cooperatives must succeed. The 'failure' was in the eye of the beholder who, quite rightly, saw immense problems in rural India that had not been solved. They wrongly concluded, however, that cooperatives could be transformed into a vehicle for solving these problems in a uniform and massive way. They were to misunderstand and, in fact, to pervert the very nature of cooperation. To be fair, there was a debate within the cooperative movement at that time. There were those amongst eminent cooperative leaders who opposed accepting Government assistance by way of grants, loans and personnel that the survey report recommended as a solution to the failure of cooperatives. One amongst them, Shri L C Jain, my colleague on the Cooperative Initiative Panel, argued eloquently that government funds would lead to government officers which would lead to government control and the end of cooperation. Unfortunatley, however, the majority were lured by the possibilities of using additional financial and human resources to build the movement. And thus, a few short years after Independence, came the real end of an opportunity for the independence of the Indian cooperative movement.

When Government sought ways to help the cooperatives, one mechanism was to purchase shares. That made Government a member of the cooperative. Nobody asked whether this Government would use the services of the cooperative—was the Government a wheat farmer, a consumer, an employee who saved and borrowed? But often Government shares substantially

outweighed the shares of the actual members. All these funds created a pot of honey and the pot of honey began to attract flies. When the performance of cooperatives and leaders, now endowed with Government shares, fell short of expectations, the Government felt the need to exercise more control. It placed nominees on the boards, and then more nominees, and then superseded the boards and replaced them with officials entirely.

It wasn't long before the political dimensions of cooperative control became evident. Initially, the chairmanship of a cooperative federation had come to be seen as one way to please a disgruntled party leader or someone whose electoral fortunes hadn't been favourable. Then, as elections to state governments brought different parties in power, there was the need to remove the old political leaders and replace them with new. This led, in turn, both to supersession of managing committees and boards on a massive scale and then to decisions not to bother with elections at all. Some states went for more than a decade without holding cooperative elections—one as long as 17 years. What happened to the principle of democratic control? Were those organizations—whatever they may have been when formed—truly cooperatives?

For a lengthy period of time, laws and regulations were amended and changed in ways that gave greater and greater power to the Registrar and to those who directed the Registrar. As those involved in drafting such acts became increasingly concerned with protecting government funds and with ensuring control, the Acts and Rules drifted further and further away from cooperative values and principles. Newly amended Acts gave the Registrar the power to merge societies, or divide them to supersede boards and managing committees. And, the best of all, the power to exempt any society or class of societies from the provisions of the Act which, in effect, meant placing the entire cooperative movement at the mercy of the Registrar's office.

One incident highlights the decay of the cooperative movement: the loan waiver programme. First, in a single

state, and then nationally, a responsible government 'waived' cooperative loans of less than Rs.10,000. What was actually waived? The savings of members and of the general public who had deposits in district central cooperative banks and state apex banks. While there were promises to reimburse the cooperatives, these have not been fully honoured. It is extraordinary that, instead of waiving all the loans due to moneylenders, government felt it could waive loans that had been made with the savings and deposits of the public.

Of course, in time, the voices of those who believed in cooperation began to grow louder, or at least to find an occasional sympathetic ear. New committees that were formed to look at the cooperative movement began to notice that there were problems with government control and pointed out that these so-called cooperatives were rapidly losing their cooperative character. The Ardhanareeswaran Committee began the 'counter-revolution', arguing that there were many areas of government involvement in cooperatives that damaged rather than helped. The Agricultural Credit Review Committee chaired by Prof. A M Khusro argued eloquently for reducing the profile of the Registrar. Then in 1991, the Planning Commission appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of the late Chaudhary Brahm Perakash that drafted a Model Cooperative Act. Shri Mohan Dharia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission commended the Model Act to the then Government, urging that it be used as the basis for amending the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984. Initiatives were taken to introduce a chapter in the Companies Act to permit registration of multi-State Cooperative companies, providing them with the same regulatory framework as enjoyed by private and public limited companies. Then, in 1995, the Government of Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of late N T Rama Rao, enacted a landmark Mutually-Aided Cooperative Societies Act, 1995 which, for the first time, gave cooperatives in India the same freedom of operation and

right to be a cooperative as is enjoyed by cooperatives in the advanced economies. The Andhra Pradesh Act was followed by a Bihar Act which, although having some defects, provided a reasonable home for cooperatives. Other states like Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have liberal cooperative legislation under consideration. And the election manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party included a commitment to amend the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act in line with the Model Act.

The Indian Cooperative Movement

In the years since Independence, there has been considerable growth in the size of the Indian cooperative movement. For sheer numbers of cooperatives and members, there is no movement in the world that is larger. In 1997 we claimed 4,11,123 cooperatives with a membership of 19.78 crores. In some areas, cooperatives have made a real impact on the lives of the members. There are employees thrift and credit societies that date, in some cases, to the early years of this century which have grown into large, responsible and efficient financial institutions, serving the needs of their members far better than banks could. There are urban cooperative banks that have become major financial institutions in their own right: the Mercantile Cooperative Bank and the Saraswat Cooperative Bank, among others, have branches throughout Bombay and beyond. The sugar cooperatives of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have played a major role not only in ensuring a fair return to the members and encouraging their productivity, but have spearheaded the growth of the modern sugar industry in India. Modesty prevents me from saying the same about our dairy and oilseed growers' cooperatives. In some states, particularly Kerala, the primary agricultural credit cooperatives have performed exceedingly well in mobilizing savings and meeting members' loan requirements.

It would be fair to say that in almost every *taluka* of India there is at least one good cooperative. Despite the harsh laws and harsher regulation they face, these cooperatives have survived and thrived, and continue to serve the needs of their members. One example should show not only how cooperatives can succeed but how, if there were more successful cooperatives, our country would be literally transformed.

In Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh, hardly a garden of Eden, there is a cooperative—the Mulkanoor Rural Cooperative Bank—that serves 14 villages. It was founded 40 or so years ago and has grown from strength to strength. If there were a Mulkanoor for every 14 villages in India, if there were some 41,000 Mulkanoor cooperatives, then those cooperatives would have:

- Provided full time employment for 45 lakh rural people;
- Raised Rs.47,150 crores of member equity
- Mobilized savings deposits of Rs.250,000 crores
- Amassed reserves of Rs. 233,000 crores
- Created a capital base (shares, deposits and reserves) of more than Rs.500,000 crores
- Loaned and recovered Rs.300,000 crores annually
- Sold Rs.30,000 crores worth of inputs, marketed Rs.71,000 crores worth of agricultural produce and marketed Rs.7,000 crores of consumer goods.

Mulkanoor represents the unfulfilled promise of the Indian cooperative. In the fifty years since Independence, cooperatives have never gained their full freedom, the freedom to operate as cooperatives in the interest of their members. That a relative handful of cooperatives along with the sugar, oilseeds and dairy cooperatives have succeeded is ample evidence of the potential of cooperation. One can only hope that—though fifty years late—this year will be the one in which our cooperatives begin their own ‘tryst with destiny.’ For a liberated cooperative movement will be a major building block for an India transformed. Transformed not just economically, but socially and politically. □

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE OF INDIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM

Ramachandra Guha

When India played South Africa in a one-day match in Calcutta some years ago, the great Indian cricketer, Sunil Gavaskar, was asked by a fellow television commentator to predict the likely winner. "I tried to look into my crystal ball", answered Gavaskar, "but it is clouded up by the Calcutta smog". He might well have added : "To clear it I then dipped my crystal ball in the river Hooghly (which flows alongside the city cricket stadium), but it came up even dirtier than before".

The quality of air and water in Calcutta is representative of conditions in all Indian cities. Little wonder then that foreign visitors come sturdily equipped with masks and bottles of mineral water. Less visible to the tourist, and often times to urban Indians themselves, is the continuing environmental degradation in the countryside. Thus all social groups are faced with chronic shortages of natural resources in their daily life. Peasant women have to trudge further and further for fuelwood for their hearth. Their menfolk, meanwhile, are digging deeper and deeper for a trickle of water to irrigate their fields. Forms of livelihood crucially dependent on the bounty of nature—such as fishing, sheep-rearing or basket-weaving—are being abandoned all over India. Those who once subsisted on these occupations are joining the band of 'ecological refugees', flocking to the cities in search of employment. The urban folk themselves complain

of shortages of water, power, construction material and (for industrial units) of raw material.

Such shortages flow directly from the abuse of the environment—the too rapid exhaustion of the resource base without a thought to its replenishment. Shortages lead, in turn, to sharp conflicts between competing groups of resource users. These conflicts have fuelled an environmental movement that is among the most vibrant in Asia. It began in April 1973 with the *Chipko Andolan* for the protection of the Himalayan forests. The romantic portrayal of women hugging trees has led to *Chipko* being viewed in some quarters as a cuddly teddy bear of a movement, wishing to protect virgin forest where deer roam and sages pray. But in fact the movement did not wish to keep forests in pristine purity. It hoped rather to reassert the rights over fuel, fodder, and small timber of the hill peasants whose claims had been set aside in favour of commerce and industry.

Inspired by its leader, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, *Chipko* then set about planting up barren hillsides and promoting energy-saving technologies. From the beginning *Chipko* was as much as social justice as an environmental movement. Such is also the case with the *Narmada Bachao Andolan*, which is to Indian greens in the nineties what *Chipko* was in the seventies. This is fundamentally a struggle for elementary human rights, for the rights of a hundred thousand Indians who are asked, nay forced, to make way for a dam that shall further impoverish them. True, the dam will also enrich thousands of others, but, ask the villagers of the submergence area in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, why should we be removed from our homes so that someone else gets fat?

Movements like *Chipko* and *Narmada*, or the fisherfolk's struggle in Kerala, are the visible face of Indian environmentalism. But there are also hundreds of 'invisible' environmentalists, who shun protest in favour of constructive work in the countryside. They are invisible to the media but not to the communities they live with. Some groups work on reviving traditional

technologies, such as tank irrigation, that have fallen into disuse. Others implement newer technologies that are low-cost and resource-conserving, such as biogas plants. Yet others mobilize local communities in programmes of ecological restoration, planting trees or protecting fragile soils.

The cycle of environmental degradation, resource shortages and social conflict is one of the most worrying aspects of life in contemporary India. In its long-term, country-wide implications, the environmental 'problem' is even more portentous (and thus more worthy of attention) than the Kashmir 'problem' or the balance of payments 'problem'. And yet, it has been poorly recognized by the intelligentsia, and insufficiently acted upon by politicians. But as we move into the 21st century, the very survival of Indian society will depend crucially on how it responds to the environmental challenge.

The first, and in the short term the most likely response, is simply to ignore it. Take the programme of economic liberalization now gathering momentum. Liberalization might be defined as being not Business-as-Usual but rather, More-Business-than-Usual. This programme is to be welcomed on several counts. If it succeeds, it shall loosen the stifling control of the state apparatus, and thus reduce its capacity to skim off the cream through the discretionary supply of goods and favours. It might very well make Indian industry more efficient, competitive, and responsive to consumers.

What economic liberalization cannot do, however, is to successfully tackle ecological degradation. In fact, More-Business-than-usual will most certainly mean the more rapid exhaustion of non-renewable resources, a greater pollution of the environment, and serious impoverishment of nature-dependent communities, whose water, fish, forests, or mineral resources will be expropriated by private industry.

Environmentalists who point this out have become the target of bitter criticism by supporters of liberalization. Prominent columnists in *India Today* and the *Times of*

India—the two journals that most effectively represent India's consuming classes—are in the habit of writing savage attacks on the environmental movement. It is claimed that by opposing destructive dams and polluting factories, Greens are taking India back into medieval times. Market-friendly columnists write as though all that lies between India and Utopia are some road-blocks erected by campaigning Greens. If liberalization fails to make India another Singapore or Taiwan, it seems it will be the fault of people like Medha Patkar, the leader of the *Narmada* movement. There are conspiracy theories abroad, mutterings about agendas being set by discredited socialists and socialist regimes.

There is a certain irony in this, for not so long ago Greens were being vilified from the other end of the economic spectrum. In the state-managed economy of the seventies and eighties, public sector managers and technocrats were in the direct line of environmentalist ire, and they responded in kind. Doubts were cast on their motives, their methods and their patriotism. Leftists in and out of government would mutter darkly about the influence of Bonn and Washington. Some would claim that environmentalists were supported by the CIA.

The liberalizers hold sway, for the moment, but one thinks that the policies they promote will lead to an acceleration of environmental degradation and an intensification of social conflict. This will place an enormous burden on the Indian political system, which shall find it increasingly difficult to moderate these conflicts.

Let us now speculate outrageously. In October 2017, says my crystal ball, the old order shall collapse under the weight of massive social unrest, and a radical Green group will move swiftly to capture power in New Delhi. Like the Bolsheviks in Russia exactly a century before, a small but fanatical sect will fill the political vacuum, to take charge of a society on the brink.

In his 1975 novel, *Ecotopia*, the Californian writer Ernest Callenbach develops such a scenario for the western United States. An 'eco-fundamentalist' party comes to power and initiates a series of radical measures.

These include the abolition of the motor car and of materials, such as plastics, that cannot be recycled. On the positive side, there is revival of organic farming. First-hand knowledge of the wild is made an integral part of school education. But dissent, whether political or intellectual, is impermissible.

Some Indian environmentalists may find this Utopia an attractive one. But of course, there is little likelihood of a successful coup by a gang of Green Bolsheviks. In any case, an environmental revolution of this kind would come to grief far quicker than did the Soviet Revolution. India is far too variegated a country to be ruled by authoritarian means.

One might think, however, of a more moderate route of environmental reform. Let me further develop the analogy with the history of European socialism. In the late 19th century, the socialist movement split into two contending strands. One stood for violent revolution: it captured power in Russia, with what costs we know only too well. The other tendency advocated a more peaceful transition to an egalitarian society. Political parties professing 'democratic socialism' were to come to power, through the ballot box, in several European countries. These included the labour party in Great Britain, and the Social Democratic parties of Germany and Sweden. While in power these parties crafted the Welfare State, an institution that history will judge more kindly than the Soviet-style command state.

In the late 20th century, democratic green parties are making rapid strides across Western Europe. Perhaps their potential is even greater in India, where environmental degradation affects a far wider spectrum of the population (and especially the poor). As our third possible scenario, then, we have an 'eco-moderate party' winning the 16th General Election in 2011. In the best traditions of Indian politics, this new party will have both an elaborate name and a crisp, abbreviated title. It shall be called the *Samaj Aur Paryavaran Sudhaar Dal*, the Party of Social and Environmental Reform, the SPSD, or in the local idiom, the *sapsidie*.

On winning power, the SPSPD would set in motion a far-reaching process of political decentralization. Thus SPSPD cadres shall forge local institutions for more efficient and sustainable management of forests, pastures, tanks and wells. Once these institutions are in place, the rural economy will be reinvigorated. One might even witness a stream of reverse migration, so to speak, from the city back to the village.

The SPSPD shall also make imaginative use of new technological opportunities. Its first act on coming to power would be to transform the DRDO, the Defence Research and Development Organization, into the Decentralized Rural Development Organization. The reconstituted DRDO would work on converting rifles into ploughshares and missiles into solar power units. These units would provide a cheap, accessible, non-polluting and, above all, renewable source of energy for irrigation, small-scale industry and domestic users.

In this best of all possible worlds, those who destroy the environment shall pay heavily for it. There will still be paper mills, but strong fines, to be imposed by local communities exposed to contaminated water, shall force these mills to properly treat and dispose of toxic wastes. There might yet be large dams, but those displaced by them would be given proper compensation and the choice of irrigated land in the dam's command area.

The *Samaj Aur Paryavaran Sudhaar party*, then shall stand between the two extremes of doing too little (More-Business-Than-Usual) and doing too much too soon (Green Bolshevism). In a political system so obsessively focused on the short-term, my speculations might be laughed out of court. Nonetheless, the facts of environmental abuse will quite, insistently make their presence felt. For ecological degradation does tangibly affect the vast majority of India's population. Numbers are vital in a democracy, and a new political formation might in time crystallize around a platform of environmental and social renewal. □

ENVIRONMENT: THE LOST OPPORTUNITY

Vandana Shiva

When India got her freedom fifty years ago, our political leaders were preoccupied with making India a modern industrial power. The environment was not part of that preoccupation except as a supplier of raw material. The obsession with industrialism had a number of related consequences for India's environment. Firstly, it created the 'empty earth' assumption—the continuity of the colonial assumption of *Terra Nullius*—according to which the environment was emptied of people and reduced to raw material for industry. The major problem of 'displacement' of tribals and peasants for development projects like dams, mines and steel plants is associated with this assumption of the 'empty earth'. Destruction of the environment and people's rights to resources thus went hand in hand and became an inherent characteristic of post-colonial development. The right of people and communities to land, water, forest and biodiversity were annihilated and the development state became the sole owner of all natural resources.

The second major characteristic of the post colonial period was the preoccupation with the import substitution model of development. Intrinsic to this model was the idea that technologies only evolve in western industrial societies and Third World development is based on transfer of technology for import substitution. The indigenous, eco-friendly technologies were totally ignored, and over a time destroyed.

Over time, these assumptions started to be questioned. *Chipko* was the first movement in independent India which questioned the destruction of the environment and usurpation of the ownership rights over community resources such as forests by the state. The ecological slogan of *Chipko* showed that forests were more than timber and the environmental services of forests included clear air and soil and water conservation.

What do the forest bear?
Soil, Water and pure air
Soil, water and pure air
sustain the earth and all she bears.

The political slogan of Chipko was:

The forests belong to the village community
(*Van par jan ka adhikar*).

Today this awareness of people's rights has become much more widespread than in the 1970s when *Chipko* first raised them.

Reclaiming the Sovereignty of the Community

Community control is still a living tradition in some of the tribal societies of India. Communities have been struggling since the British Raj against the criminalization of the whole community due to the imposition of incongruous laws such as Land Acquisition Act(s) and Forest Act(s), and the complex administrative system which disregarded their rights over the commons. The tribal people of Santhal Parganas are protecting their community rights over village tanks even at the risk of their lives. The Kevats of the Ganga are rejecting the rights of zamindars over water and are fighting to establish their own rights over water resources. The people of Kolhan are sticking to their traditional system of self-management and are not prepared to surrender their rights in favour of new formal institutions established by the state. The *Raj Sabha* of Allahabad are managing all affairs of the village community on their own. The people of Bastar and Gadchiroli are claiming primacy of

community in the management of social matters, forests and other resources. They have taken the resolve of 'our government on our village' (*mawa mate mawa sarkar*).

The deep-rooted aspirations of the people for self-government has been given formal recognition by the Parliament through a legislation accepting the communities as the real sovereign, thus at last honouring the verdict, 'We, the People of India', of our democratic Constitution. This legislation not only treats the communities, which are designated as *gram sabha* as the pivot of the system of self-government in the scheduled areas, but a competent authority in all matters concerning community.

The Provision of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996

For the first time after 50 years of India's Independence, a significant step has been made by the introduction of the Provisions of the Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 whereby the village communities (*gram sabha*) have been granted legal recognition as a community entity. It has also recognized control over their commons. This new law, which provides an extension to the provision of Part IX of the Constitution of India for the scheduled areas, came into force on 24 December 1996. It envisages village communities as being the basic unit of the self-governing system. According to Section 4(b):

A village shall ordinarily consist of a habitation or a group of habitations, or a hamlet or a group of hamlets comprising a community and managing its affairs in accordance with traditions and customs.

In this formulation, it is the community which has been accorded the formal status of *gram sabha*. Moreover, the village community as *gram sabha* has also been endowed with specific powers. These powers include management of community resources, resolution of disputes, approval of plans and programmes and also mandatory consultation before the acquisition of the land. Conferral of certain other powers on the *gram sabha* concerning vital matters

such as ownership of minor forest produce, enforcement and prohibition, restoration of unlawfully alienated lands, control over money lending and marketing etc., has been made mandatory under the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996.

According to this Act, state legislature shall make suitable laws accordingly within a period of one year, and such laws shall be in consonance with the customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of utilization of community resources. Any such law of the state not in consonance with the provisions of this Act shall become invalid thereafter.

The Act accepts the traditions of the people and their cultural identity in the key opening formulation under section 4, sub-section (a). But can the cultural identity of a people be sustained without honouring their traditional relationship with their habitat comprising the natural resources, the very foundation of their community life? Yes, this has been provided for—for the first time in Indian legal history. Section 4(a) states that:

A state legislation on the Panchayats that may be made, shall be in consonance with the customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of community resources.

It is important to note that the significance of community over community resources has been recognized not in isolation, or as a mere economic issue, but in relation to the cultural identity of the people itself. Moreover sub-section (d) of section 4 also states that:

Every *gram sabha* shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution.

Thus, through the new Act, the state recognizes the relationship between the communities and the common, hence bestowing a very significant and pivotal role to the

village communities to safeguard their interests and empowering them to meet the challenges both from within and outside. The importance and significance of the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 to the recovery of the commons movement in India cannot be over emphasized.

However, while communities are attempting to reclaim their rights to resources both for conservation and sustainable utilization for basic needs, the Nehruvian state centred model is also under siege externally by global institutions and global corporations. In the 50th year of India's Independence the key contest has become the issue, 'who will take over ownership of the natural wealth of the country from the state—the local people or global corporations?'

This contest is most intense in the area of biodiversity and biodiversity related knowledge. On the one hand, we have global corporations usurping the ownership and control over our indigenous biodiversity through patents such as in the case of basmati, neem, turmeric, pepper etc. On the other hand, there is a new resurgence of the appreciation of indigenous knowledge system and the need to recognize these systems on their own epistemological and ontological foundations.

These conflicts between an emerging recolonization and a deep rejection of it are being played out in all legislation related to biodiversity and intellectual property rights including the patent laws, the biodiversity laws, the plant variety and farmers' rights laws.

Globalization as Corporate Ownership of Natural Resources

The contemporary globalization based on the rules of free trade is in fact the establishment of the rule of corporations over governments and people. The fiction of the corporation has become the only legal personality which can be protected under globalization—people and their rights have been reduced to 'protectionist' forces which interfere in free trade and economic growth. Through the fiction of the corporation, a minority has used

the corporate form to dominate the majority. Corporate entities which were first equated with human persons, have now been elevated above people. In Europe and the U.S., the original corporations were given the legal personality of white, male, property owners. The fiction was based on the exclusion of nature and her species, non-western cultures, women, men without property. Now the option has grown to exclude all humans.

The courts, when dealing with a corporation, accept the fiction that the corporation has a birth or death and more importantly entitlement to human and civil rights. A corporation, which exists solely on paper, can assert that it has the right to do something and that right can prevail over real persons. Over time, all responsibilities of corporations have evaporated into a system of absolute rights and absolute irresponsibility.

The rights of this fiction have increasingly become higher than those of real people. Further, while real people have rights and responsibilities, the fictitious persona of the corporation only has rights. Collections of people as communities, as cooperatives are not recognized as having a distinct legal personality like the commercial corporation.

The latest proposal of the Multilateral Agreement Investment (MAI) is the ultimate statement that only the corporation has right—neither people nor governments have rights. The MAI prevents governments from interfering in foreign investments in any way. The rules of the MAI apply to all levels of government: federal, state, county, city. Under the new MAI, no country can prevent entry by foreign companies in any economic sector.

The 'free flow of capital' will be sanctified in MAI. To further empower corporate dominion over nation-states, the MAI gives private corporations and investors 'legal standing' to sue sovereign governments. The Director General of the World Trade Organisation, Renato Ruggero, admits that the MAI is designed to become the 'Constitution for a single global economy.'

Globalization has in effect made the citizen disappear, and it has reduced the state into being a mere instrument

of global capital. The persona of the fiction had displaced the human persons on which it was modelled. Their only role is as consumers in the market place—the role of human beings as member of productive, cultural communities is being erased. On the one hand, this is rendering human beings dispensable to the production process; on the other hand, it is eroding the cultural diversity of people shaped by the diverse ways in which they have produced goods and met their needs.

The absolute power of corporations is being established by making the rights of corporations absolute and eroding the rights of people that have been built through democratic struggle. Food provisioning, health care, education, social security are all being transformed into corporate monopolies under the code words of ‘competitiveness’ and ‘efficiency’. Peoples’ rights and the public domain are being eroded by exporting the economic label of ‘protectionism’ to cover all domains—ethical, social and political. The protection of the environment and the protection of people’s security are treated as non-tariff trade barriers which need to be dismantled. While corporations have absolute rights, they have no responsibility. While citizens and the state have no rights, they have to carry all the responsibilities.

Strengthening People’s Environmental Rights Defining Freedom Beyond the State and Market

It has become fashionable to talk of the end of boundaries and borders, and the end of the nation state. However, the fading away of an era in which sovereignty resided in and was the monopoly of a nation state does not in any way imply an end to the concept of sovereignty. In fact, the end of the centralized concept of sovereignty creates a new opportunity to reshape and reassert a concept of national sovereignty dispersed through its people and its communities. This concept of sovereignty makes both the state structures and corporate structures accountable to the people and to self-organized, self-governed communities.

Globalization has rendered the relationship between the community, the state and the corporation totally fluid. It has further entrenched the powers and widened the freedom of corporations, while increasingly eroding the powers and freedom of people in diverse community settings. In the process, the state itself is undergoing major transformation, becoming more one-sided in representing corporate interest and failing to represent citizen and community interest.

State protectionism which had undermined community protectionism, is now itself being undermined by corporate protectionism. This undermining is at the heart of the globalization process. While the role of the state in regulating commercial interests and corporations is diminishing, its role in enhancing corporate rights and corporate monopolies is increasing. The erosion of the power of the nation state from outside and above does not disperse power through society, it concentrates it in the hands of corporations. It does not move power downwards into the hands of communities, it moves it upwards into the boardrooms of corporations. This creates an inverted state, a state more committed to the protection of foreign investments and less to the protection of the citizens and communities that make the country. In fact, TNCs and international institutions like the World Bank benefit from, and thus promote, an erosion of the role of the state in protecting the people through the sophistry of terms like 'liberalization of the economy' and 'free-trade'.

As globalization allows increasing transfer of resources from the public domain, either under the control of communities or of the state, discontent and dissent necessarily increase, leading to law and order problems. In such a situation, even a minimalist state restricted only to policing and law and order will become enormously large and all-pervasive, devouring much of the wealth of society and intruding into every aspect of citizen's lives.

For citizens and communities, the erosion of state power implies the withdrawal of two kinds of protection. The first protection that is withdrawn is the protection

available through the regulation of commercial profit-seeking behaviour, to prevent the destruction of livelihoods, the environment and people's health.

The second protection that is withdrawn is the protection built into traditional environmental rights and rights to knowledge and culture. Rights which are often customary and not written into law, but which are at the very heart of secure livelihoods and survival options, especially of marginal communities such as women, indigenous and tribal communities, landless and small peasants, farmers, traditional fisherfolk, indigenous healers, traditional crafts persons, etc

New concepts of IPRs, based on the interests of corporations and the reality of social, economic and political organizations of industrialized western countries are central to undermining and destroying the timeless protection traditional producer communities have had through their inalienable community rights to resources, knowledge, markets and livelihoods. IPRs, more than any other aspect of free trade treaties, make it clear that the old style state protectionism is giving way to corporate protectionism, ensuring that communities and citizens have no protection at all in law or in policy.

In fact, the destruction of the protectionism afforded through the traditional customary rights and practices related to biodiversity, traditional knowledge and traditional system of production leaves the traditional communities vulnerable to piracy of their resources and their knowledge, by commercial and corporate interests claiming exclusive protection for the pirated resources and knowledge.

The philosophy of democratic pluralism recognizes the anti-democratic nature of the centralized nation state on which state protectionism of the past was founded. But it also sees the emergency of corporate protectionism as the real threat to democratic rights and economic livelihoods. In this perspective, countering this recolonization requires the reinvention of national sovereignty by democratic processes. To create national systems which act in

partnership with local communities to protect the natural wealth, the economic livelihoods and the cultural and intellectual heritage of the country.

The philosophy of democratic pluralism, the redefining of economic freedom and the conservation of biodiversity are mutually reinforcing systems through which both sustainability and justice are ensured. Our civilization has always linked issues of ecology with issues of equity. In the *Isho Upanishad* it is said:

The universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant for the benefit of (all) creation. Each individual life form must, therefore, learn to enjoy benefits by farming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not any one species encroach upon other's rights.

Whenever we engage in consumption or production patterns which take more than we need, we are engaging in violence. Thus non-sustainable consumption and non-sustainable production constitute a violent economic order.

According to the *Isho Upanishad*:

A selfish man over-utilising the resources of nature to satisfy his own ever-increasing needs is nothing but a thief, because using resources beyond one's needs would result in the utilization of resources over which others have a right.

The relationship between restraint in resource use and social justice was also the core element of Mahatma Gandhi's political philosophy. In his view:

The earth provides enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed.□

AN ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY AGENDA

Anil Agarwal

India is a country with extraordinary ecological diversity and richness of life forms. Within the same country, we can move:

- From the hot desert of Rajasthan to the cold desert of Ladakh;
- From areas with extremely low rainfall, where it is usually less than 200 mm per annum, to areas with extremely high rainfall in the North-East and Kerala, where the average rainfall can be over 400 mm; and
- From the sub-temperature mountains of the Himalayas to the tropical high mountains of the Nilgiris and Palanis in Tamilnadu.

Between all these systems are numerous plateaus, hill ranges, riverine deltas, extraordinary wetlands like those of the Sunderbans, and above all, the massive, alluvial Indo-Gangetic Plains whose potential productivity is probably unmatched in the world.

The variety of ecological conditions sustains a tremendous amount of diverse life forms. About 15,000 species of plants (out of a known world total of 150,000) and 75,000 animal species (out of a world total of 1.5 million) have their homes in India. On two percent of the world's landmass, we possess around five percent of the known living organisms on earth. But under the multi-

pronged attack of five major factors^{3/4} industrial development, agricultural modernization, unmanaged urbanization, population growth and extremely poor environmental governance^{3/4} India has seen a rapid decline in the quality of all its natural resources ranging from land and forests to water, air and bio-diversity. Today India is one of the most polluted countries of the world

Recognizing this decline in the 1970s when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was told that the Indian flagship species- the tiger-was about to disappear, a rapid-fire action plan was put into place. The Wildlife Act was promulgated in 1974 and so was the Water Pollution Control Act. During the height of Emergency (1975–77), Mrs. Gandhi brought forests into the concurrent list of the Constitution and made environmental protection each citizen's responsibility. In her second tenure as Prime Minister in the early 1980s, Mrs. Gandhi enacted the Air Pollution Control Act, the Forest Conservation Act and set up the Department of Environment. The mid-1980s belonged to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who enacted the Environment Protection Act, upgraded the Department of Environment to a Ministry of Environment and Forests and launched a massive programme to green the land and clean up the river Ganga. Successive Prime Ministers have shown little interest and there has been a decline in political commitment during the 1990s for environmental concerns.

By the mid-1980s, the state had already built a respectable governance structure in the form of environmental laws and institutions, from the central level to the state level. But this entire infrastructure failed to prevent the rot that had set in by the early 1970s.

It was in the 1970s that voices first began to be heard about the scale of deforestation and decline of the wildlife species. By the early 1980s, experts began to say that one-third to one-half of India's land had become a wasteland and river pollution was becoming serious. By the early 1990s, air pollution and filth and dirt had become the hallmark of almost all Indian towns and cities.

Three Successes

In this entire scenario, there have been three successes, but these have to be qualified. The tiger population began to increase in the late 1970s and 1980s but again has begun to show a sharp decline leading many to argue that the species will disappear early in the next century. The forest cover has been maintained since the mid-1980s but nobody really knows how much of it can even be called a 'forest' as a large part of the forest estate today is made of plantations. Rural firewood availability has shown an increase but a big reason for this unexpected increase is the unexpected invasion of a species called *Prosopis juliflora* on India's degraded lands from Kutch in Gujarat to Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu.

Four Rays of Hope

But four small rays of hope have emerged despite this dismal scenario, generated almost entirely by the democratic character of India's Constitution. The struggle against 'the system', which destroys the environment has grown.

One, India's NGO movement, which has its roots in the pre-Independence Gandhian movement, has not only grown but also has taken a deep interest in environmental concerns, especially in the society-environment interaction.

Two, the judges of the Supreme Court have reinterpreted the Indian Constitution to give the Indian people the right to a healthy environment, something unprecedented in the world, and have thus promoted public participation in India's environmental governance by encouraging a spate of public interest litigations on environmental issues, which in turn has helped to make the government more accountable.

Three, the people themselves have shown a great desire to save and regenerate their environment, in some cases with outstanding results. The villagers of Sukhomajri and Ralegan Siddhi have shown that the rural economy can

be pulled up dramatically by its bootstraps-which literally no other form of economic intervention can do-if the people are organized to manage their environment. Far less talked about than Sukhomajri and Ralegan Sddhis is the effort of over 1,000 village communities in Orissa, the Chotanagpur area of Bihar, the Bhagirathi valley of Uttar Pradesh, and Panchmahal region of Gujarat, to protect government forests entirely on their own and despite government laws. These people, seeing the economic crisis in their lives which had resulted from the ecological crisis that had engulfed them, slowly began to take steps to protect the forests.

Four, the media has given strong support to the environmental concern.

Continuing Weakness

All these rays of hope are also struggling to make their impact felt on a nationwide basis. The NGO movement has failed to weld itself into a powerful and well coordinated nationwide movement which goes beyond a group of people fighting projects to a group who can change the environmental governance system and its policies. The NGOs have built a powerful 'amorphous' movement with a focus on certain heroes and heroines but it has no national institutions like the Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth in the west. Without strong institutions, no movement can last once the leader disappears. The best example of this is the fate of the Gandhian movement. The Indian NGO movement remains strong in political dimensions of the environmental concern but weak in its policy and scientific dimensions. It is unlikely that Indian NGO movement could have highlighted a creeping environmental concern like global warming which threatens to destabilize the world. A lot of the power of the NGO movement has, in fact, come from local social mobilization, media and the courts. The impact of the court orders has remained extremely poor because they have run into a brick wall of poor environmental governance.

The people themselves are making efforts to the extent

they can. But even the best of their efforts are failing to spread. Attempts to replicate Ralegan Siddhi have run into political opposition because the village leader, Anna Hazare, decided to launch a crusade against corruption. Villagers of Sukhomajri have now created a forest and other environmental assets that can give them a crore of rupees every year but they are at their wit's end with the constant interference of the government itself, which wants a large share of the pie, and neighbouring villagers who are being egged on by external agencies. Having created such a wonderful forest, some of Sukhomajri's villagers are today even prepared to burn it down because of all the hassles they face.

The media has focussed more on the big struggles and big disasters while vast rural problems have received little attention. In any case, its reportage of events has never been sustained and has not got down to a reportage of the core issues underlying problems like poor environmental governance. As a result, there is a greater awareness of problems but little awareness of what has succeeded and what needs to be done.

Overall, the environmental future remains a very dark one. So what needs to be done? The only answer lies in the third war of Independence. Just as the non-participatory, corrupt and incompetent form of governance that the British promoted for their colonial ends, everyone today has reached a state of perfect inefficiency. This is a war that post-Independence Indians will have to fight with themselves to protect their environment, society and culture if they want to control the ravages of economic growth, which will be exacerbated by extreme inequality, illiteracy, poverty, an abysmal lack of civic values and growing self-centerlines. This is what the Centre for Science and Environment has always called the Big Challenge: the Challenge of Balance. A struggle not with outsiders but with ourselves. □



The Population has steadily increased despite government efforts to control it

POPULATION: THE RISING GRAPH

K. Srinivasan

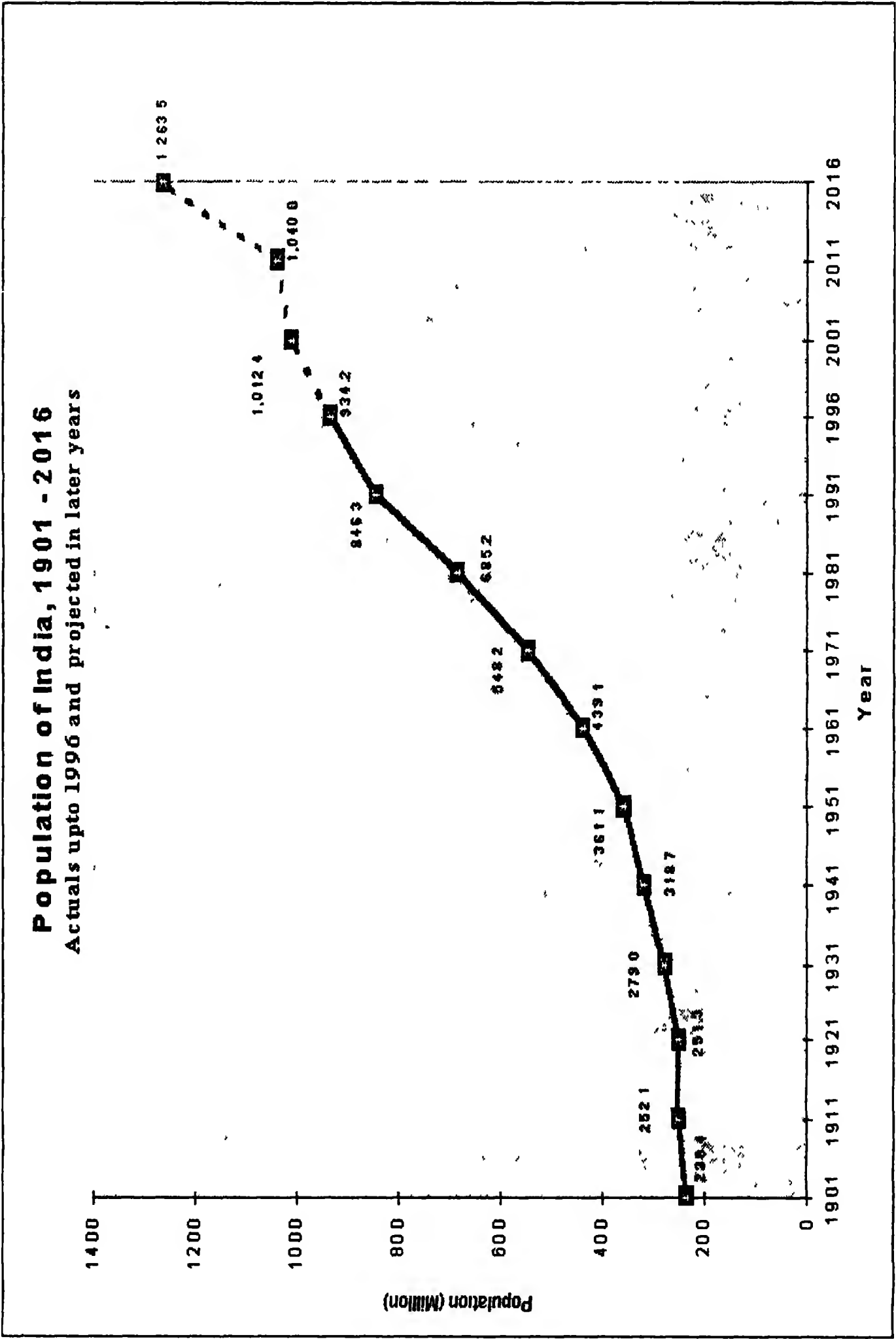
Population Concern Before Independence

Explicit concern over India's rapid rise of population originated in the third decade of this century. Until 1920, India's population had been growing very slowly owing to the heavy toll from famines, epidemics, and wars. According to census reports, the population of the country within its present geographical boundaries actually declined between 1911 and 1921, from 252.1 to 251.3 million because of the high mortality inflicted by the influenza pandemic of 1918–19. It is estimated that about 5 per cent of the country's population—some 13 million persons—died in that epidemic. The population has increased steadily since 1921, largely because of epidemic, famine control and sanitation measures undertaken by the provincial governments. For the first time, since the initiation of a systematic population census in 1881, India's population increased slightly by more than 10 per cent (or by 27.7 million) in a decade, with the 1931 census enumerating a population of 279.0 million (Hutton:1932).

In this context, concern over such an unprecedented rapid rise in population arose from four quarters: intellectuals, social reformers (especially those interested in improving the status of women), the Congress Party (the leading political party that spearheaded the movement for political independence), and the government.

The intellectuals in India were mostly drawn from the upper caste elite sections of the society and many of them

Chart-2



went to England for higher education or for training for posts in the Indian Civil services. They were, there, exposed to the Malthusian theory of population—positive and negative checks on populations growing beyond its means of subsistence. India was always cited as a basket case of poverty whose population was growing beyond its means of subsistence. When the scholars returned to India, they set up Neo-Malthusian Leagues on patterns similar to such Leagues in England and Europe to warn the people about the dangers of population growth. The first such League to discuss and propagate on the hazards of high population growth was set up in Madras city (now Chennai) in July 1929. The League published its first propaganda journal on the need for controlling birth rate, the 'Madras Birth Control Bulletin', in the same year. Similar Neo-Malthusian Leagues were started in subsequent years in other cities, notably in Poona and Bombay (now Mumbai). Madras and Bombay seem to be the two Indian cities that were first concerned about the population problem at the intellectual level which subsequently gained momentum in other cities (see Srinivasan:1995).

The interest and action from social reformers for the control of population growth originated from those activists who were primarily interested in promoting women's health and welfare, especially keen on liberating women from the wheels of childbearing, preventing unwanted births, and reducing the hazards to the life and health of pregnant women who were willing to expose themselves to cruel and primitive methods of induced abortion. They were largely influenced by the work of Margaret Sanger in the United States and Edith-Howe Martin from England. This social reform movement was initiated by Prof. R D Karve, who advocated widow-remarriage, practice of artificial methods of family planning to protect women from the hazards of unwanted pregnancies, and who started a magazine called *Samaj-Swasthya* (Social Hygiene) in Marathi language in 1927, which was published regularly until his death in 1953. He also started the first contraceptive clinic in Girgaum, at

the heart of Bombay in 1921. This social-reform movement eventually spread to other parts of the country and was largely responsible for the establishment of Family Planning Association of India in 1949 in Bombay.

At the political level, the Congress Party's attitude towards population control was tinged with scepticism mostly because of Mahatma Gandhi's strong moral opposition to the use of artificial methods of birth control. Mahatma Gandhi argued that though he was convinced that high population growth is of major social concern, the solution to reduction of fertility should not be through artificial methods of birth control, but through sexual abstinence and self discipline. He argued that widespread use of artificial methods of family planning would ultimately lead to moral and social decay. The social reformers and intellectuals were unable to convince Mahatma Gandhi to their point of view (Prabhu:1959). However, some of the princely States in India considered high population growth as a hurdle to development and social welfare. The Maharaja of Mysore commissioned, officially, two family planning clinics in 1930—one in Cheluvamba Hospital, Mysore and the other in Vani Vilas Hospital, Bangalore. These were the first two official family planning clinics to be started in the world.

The last vestiges of moralistic objections to family planning seem to have been eroded because of the Bengal famine of 1943–44, which resulted in 1.5 million deaths within a period of 12 months, and made the Government of India and the officials aware of the precariously poor conditions of people and their extreme vulnerability during conditions of famine. The report of the Bengal Famine Inquiry Committee, constituted by the Government of India which submitted its in 1945, contained a chapter on the potential dangers to the economy and life of people arising out of rapid population growth, especially a population living in abject poverty and deprived of the bare necessities of life. Mr. R A Gopalaswamy, ICS was the Member-Secretary of the Committee, who later became the Registrar General of India in 1951 and conducted the first Census of

independent India. When he became the Chief Secretary of Madras Province in 1954, he introduced a strong incentive based family planning programme. Similarly, the Bhore Committee, which was set up in 1943 to make an assessment of the health conditions in India submitted its report in 1946 and recommended a suitable health infrastructure for the country. It also stressed the need for a national programme of family planning for improving the health status of people. The reports of these two committees, the Bhore Committee and the Bengal Famine Enquiry Committee, paved the way for the Government of India to adopt a National Programme of Family Planning in 1947. With the death of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, the moral objections for the adoption of artificial methods of birth control seem to have waned and the official family planning programme was launched in 1952 as a part of the first five year plan (1951–56). However, the Congress Party, whose values and ideals were largely shaped by the Gandhian philosophy retained, to some extent, the moralistic objections against free and unrestricted use of artificial methods of family planning.

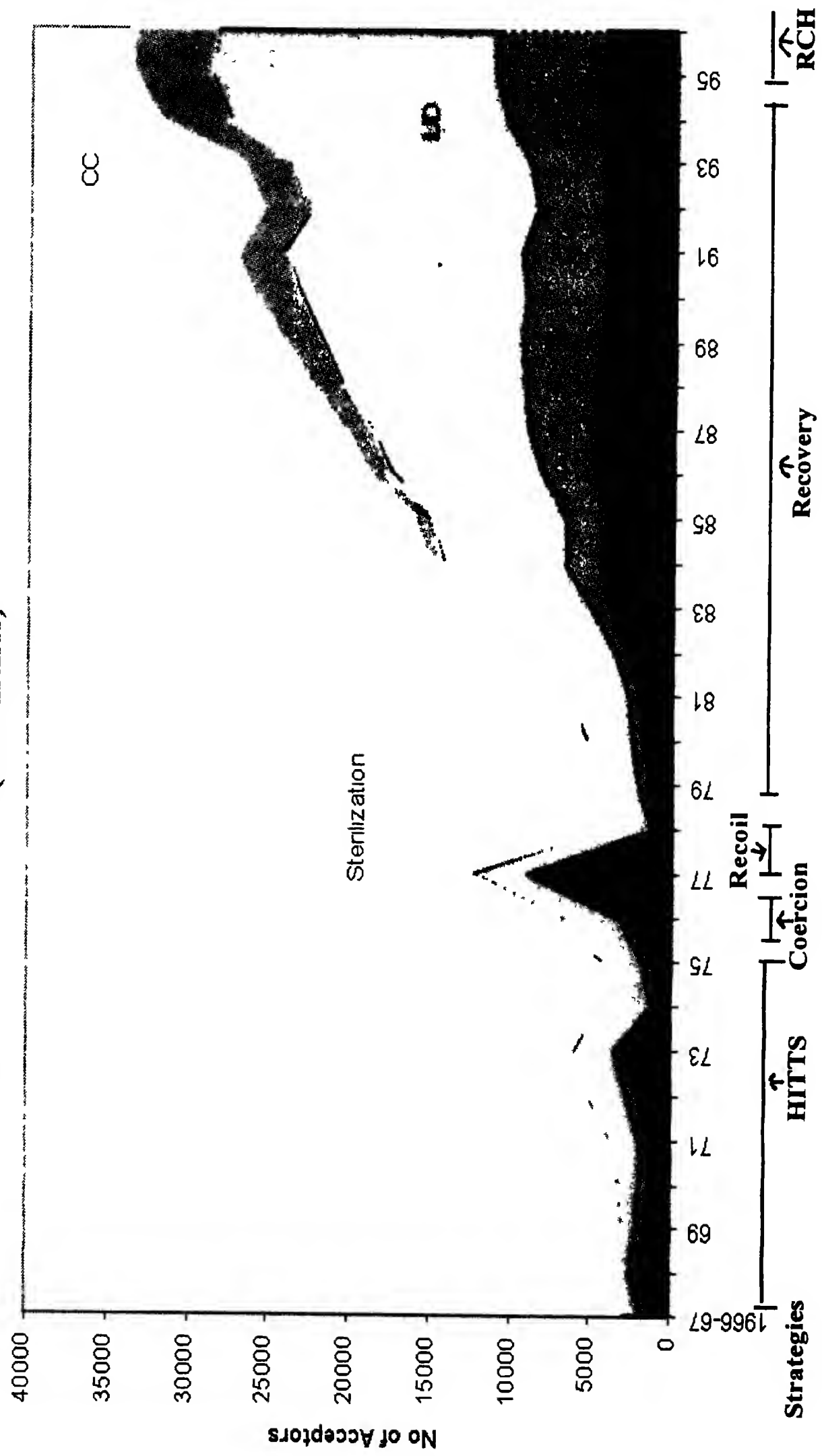
Policies and Programmes from 1951 to 1976: HITTS Approach

This period covers the first twenty five years of the family planning programme implemented during the three five year plans (1951–66), the inter-plan period (1966–69), the fourth five year plan (1969–74), and the first two years of the fifth five year plan 1975–76.

In April 1950, the Government of India appointed a Population Policy Committee under the Chairmanship of Minister of Health and upon the Committee's recommendations, a Family Planning Cell was created in the office of the Director General of Health Services. The first five year plan document referred to a programme for Family Limitation and Population Control—terms which may be considered objectionable on humanitarian grounds now. It sought to reduce the birth rate to the extent necessary to stabilize the population at a level consistent

Chart-1

Family Planning Acceptors by Method, India, 1966-67 to 1995-96
(in thousands)



with the requirements of the national economy. A sum of Rs. 6.5 million (US \$ 1.44 million at the exchange rate of US \$ 1=Rs 4.5 at that time) was allocated by the Central Government for the family planning programme, which included a plethora of activities such as motivation, education, research and clinical services.

A Demographic Training and Research Center (now called the International Institute for Population Sciences) was established in Bombay in 1956 with the assistance of United Nations for undertaking training and research on population issues. Family Planning programme was intended to be promoted through a network of family planning clinics under the assumption that there was already some intrinsic demand for family planning services and that provision of supply through clinics will induce further demand. This clinical approach was intensified during the second plan period (1956–61). The budget provision for family planning during this period increased from Rs 6.5 million to Rs 50 million. The actual expenditure incurred during the first and second five year plans was less than the budgeted amount, only Rs 1.5 and Rs 21.6 million respectively. The clinical approach of family planning promoted the methods of diaphragm, vaginal jelly, vaginal foam tablets, condoms and vasectomy in some states. During the later half of the second plan, the scheme of giving some incentive money to acceptors of vasectomy (Rs. 10 per case) was introduced in Madras Province. The Chief Secretary of the Madras Province, Mr. R A Gopalaswamy, postulated the concept of 'improvident maternity', which aimed at preventing all births of four and above by a strong programme of vasectomy, motivating men to undertake sterilization operations after the third child. He also estimated (rather crudely but not incorrectly) that if 7 vasectomies were done for 1000 population per year over a period of 10 years all improvident births could be avoided, and the birth rate could be reduced by 40 per cent. The seeds of incentive-based, target-oriented and time bound sterilization programme were thus sown in Madras province in the late fifties, which was immediately adopted in Bombay province

next year, and in the next plan period in the country as a whole. The number of family planning clinics, where family planning services including sterilizations were provided, increased from 147 at the end of the first five year plan to 4,165 at the end of the second five year plan.

The slow pace of increase in contraceptive acceptance by the end of the second plan and the poor attendance in the family planning clinics indicated that the demand for family planning from the people was not as high as was expected in the plan documents. The clinic-oriented approach was hence replaced by an extension-education approach in the third five-year plan (1961–66), which aimed at bringing the message and services of family planning to the people by house to house visits by the field staff employed in the Primary Health Centres and sub-Centres in rural areas and government hospitals in urban areas. Shift from clinical approach to extension approach, which continues to be a pervasive methodology of family planning programme till date, was based on the following premises :

1. There is a need to create a small family norm in the community by appropriate information-education-communication (ICE) procedures by involving opinion leaders. Six Family Planning Communication Research Centres were established in different parts of the country, to carry out field based action-research, as well as social science and demographic research for identifying and resolving field based issues in the implementation of family planning programmes.
2. It is necessary to inform every eligible couple on the availability and use of contraceptive methods.
3. It is necessary to provide contraceptive services to all couples in a socially and psychologically acceptable manner.

During the third plan period, family planning programme was thus made an integral part of the public health departments of all states. It was considered a part of health services in the country. The symbol of an inverted red triangle was introduced to convey the message of

family planning. Various innovative measures of popularizing the programme, including carrying giant sized logos on elephant backs in various parts of the country were tried and, for the first time, a demographic goal was set. It was desired in 1962 that a crude birth rate of 25 should be achieved by 1972, a goal which is yet to be achieved in 1998. Table 1 provides the demographic goals set for the country as a whole by the Government of India in different plan periods and recent actuals.

The expenditure on Family Planning programme during the third plan period increased to Rs.248.6 million, 11 times more than the second plan. With the setting up of demographic goals for the programme and achievement of these goals being made the responsibility of the health departments, the programme became entrenched in a HITTS model i.e., Health department operated, Incentive based, Target-oriented, Time-bound and Sterilization-focussed programme. A separate department of family planning was set up at the center and the departments of health in the states were renamed, over a period of time, as departments of health and family planning and family planning programme was fully funded from the central funds with staffing patterns and methods of functioning formulated by the central government. In my view, 1962 saw the beginning of the HITTS approach which lasted until 1977, leading to the 'coercive approach' during 1976-77.

The period from 1966 to 69 was termed as a 'plan holiday'. However, during this period, family planning programme was integrated not only in the health system but also specifically made a part of the maternal and child health programme implemented through the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in rural areas and Urban Family Planning Centres in towns. The Government of India gave additional funds to state governments for recruitment of medical and para-medical staff including extension educators in the PHCs and urban health centres for working specifically for family planning. The expenditure during this three year (1966-69) was Rs 704.6 million, almost three times the expenditure during the five years of the third plan. Rapid expansion of the PHCs and Urban

Table 1
Desired Demographic Goals: India (1962-97)

Year of Statement	Specified Goal	Target Year for Achieving Goal	Goals	Actuals
1962	CBR,25	1972		
1966	CBR,25	as promptly as possible		
1968	CBR,23	1978-79		
1969 (start of Fourth Five-Year Plan)	CBR,32	1974-75		
	CBR,25	1979-81		
1974 (start of Fifth Five-Year Plan)	CBR,30	1979		
	CBR,25	1984		
April 1976 (First Population Policy)	CBR,30	1978-79		
	CBR,25	1983-84		
April 1977 (Second Population Policy)	CBR,30	1978-79		
	CBR,25	1983-84		
January 1978 (Central Council of Health)	CBR,30	1982-83		
January 1981 (Sixth 5-Year Plan, 1980-85)	NRR,1, CBR,21, CDR,9,	2000		
Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90)	e°, 64 years, CEP, 60% NRR,1 CBR,29 1, CDR,10 4, universal immunization antenatal care-75%	by 2006-11 by 1990 IMR,90, CEP,42% by 1991 by 1990	1991-92 57 7 58 7 78 0 10 0 28 9 130 3	2006-07 66 1 67 1 48 0 7 4 21 7 91 4
		e°- Male e°- Female IMR CDR CBR GFR	1996-97 60 1 61 1 68 0 8 7 25 7 113 0	(1991-95) (1991-95) (1996) (1996) (1996) (1995)
Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-97)				

Note CBR= crude birth rate, CDR= crude death rate, CEP= percentage of eligible effectively protected, GFR= general fertility rate, IMR= infant mortality rate, e° = life expectancy at birth, NRR= net production rate
Source Srinivasan K, 1995 (Table 2 1)

Family Planning Centres took place to pursue the HITTS model. The 1961 census showed a rising population growth rate and high fertility levels necessitating, in 1966, a postponement of the demographic goal of crude birth rate (CBR) of 25, which was again revised in 1968 aiming at CBR of 23 by 1978–79 (See Table 1).

The family planning programme got a big boost during the fourth plan period (1969–74) when the budget was increased to Rs.3150 million, though the actual expenditure was Rs.2844 million. Table 2 provides the governmental expenditure on family planning over the years. The infrastructure was considerably expanded and there was a strong desire on the part of the Government to resolve the population problem once and for all by organising vasectomy camps on a mass scale, so that these facilities are available for men in their own geographic proximity and the services of skilled surgeons could be optimally utilised. In order to help women with unwanted pregnancies to have safe abortions from medically skilled personnel and not resort to primitive abortive procedures, a law liberalising induced abortion camouflaged under the term 'Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act' was passed by Parliament in 1972. The incentive amounts provided to acceptors of vasectomy and tubectomy were substantially increased, incentives were provided to motivators and to state governments by the central government for their performance in family planning, which were based essentially on the number of sterilizations done in relation to the population.

However, the 1971 census indicated that the high rates of population growth had continued unabated during the decade, with population increasing from 439.2 million in 1961 to 548.2 million in 1971 i.e., by 24.8 percent as compared to 21.5 per cent in 1951–61. This continuing increase in population growth rate inspite of the vast network of personnel involved in the programme and sizeable expenditure from the central exchequer frustrated the policy-makers and programme administrators, which led to draconian measures during the emergency period of 1975–76. The effective couple protection rate, which is an

Table 2
Governmental Expenditure on Family Planning Programs:
India (1951-96)

Five-Year Plan	Period	Total (millions)	Per capita	Per Sterilization equivalent
First	1951-56	1.45	0.00	N.A
Second	1956-61	21.56	0.05	N.A
Third	1961-66	248.60	0.54	N.A
Annual	1966-67	134.26	0.27	110.41
	1967-68	265.23	0.52	126.97
	1968-69	305.15	0.59	162.49
Fourth	1969-70	361.84	0.68	218.11
	1970-71	489.04	0.90	306.03
	1971-72	617.56	1.11	248.91
	1972-73	797.48	1.41	236.43
	1973-74	578.46	1.00	469.15
Fifth	1974-75	620.48	1.05	378.80
	1975-76	806.14	1.33	262.75
	1976-77	1729.82	2.79	199.68
	1977-78	933.37	1.48	751.51
Annual	1978-79	1075.45	1.66	576.65
	1979-80	1185.11	1.79	547.39
Sixth	1980-81	1408.98	1.79	568.37
	1981-82	1930.20	2.10	584.55
	1982-83	2883.20	2.79	614.89
	1983-84	3829.84	5.31	666.06
	1984-85	4240.66	5.80	763.40
Seventh	1985-86	4796.80	6.37	719.89
	1986-87	5688.50	7.40	801.21
	1987-88	5841.70	7.67	828.72
	1988-89	6718.40	8.41	926.17
	1989-90	8006.60	9.59	1129.35
	1990-91	8658.32	10.23	1222.58
Eighth	1991-92	10075.14	11.67	1504.43
	1992-93	10904.00	12.38	1550.41
	1993-94	13126.23	14.62	1652.97
	1994-95	15348.76	16.76	1840.60
	1995-96	16023.90	17.15	1947.25
	1996-97*	15350.00	16.16	N.A

* Allocation

Note: N.A = not available.

Source: India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Family Welfare, Year Books for various years

approximation for the contraceptive prevalence rate but based on the programme service statistics, indicates that percentage of couples protected by any modern methods of family planning was only 14.7 per cent by the end of March 1974.

The fifth plan document which covered the period 1974–79, but implemented during 1974–78, refixed the demographic goals of achieving the birth rates as 30 by 1979 and 25 by 1984. The programme was given the highest priority by the central government during this period and the expenditure during 1974–78 rose to Rs 4,090 million, almost double per year of that in the fourth plan. Mass camps were organized with larger frequency in more states. In some classic camps such as the one conducted in Ernakulam during 1972, 65,000 vasectomies were carried out in a fortnight's time.

The Emergency Period (Coercive Approach)

India went through a phase of national internal emergency under the Prime Ministership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi from June 75 to March 77, when rights of individuals were largely suppressed, freedom of the press restricted and powers of the judiciary curtailed with the government at the center assuming enormous authoritarian powers. One major impact of the emergency was felt on the population front, and was spearheaded by late Sanjay Gandhi, the second son of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. For the first time, a National Population Policy was formulated and adopted by the Parliament in April 1976, which called for a 'frontal attack on the problems of population', and which inspired the state governments to 'pass suitable legislations to make family planning compulsory for citizens, and to stop child bearing after three children, if the 'state so desires'. Many other measures were introduced such as stipulations to government officials in the health and revenue departments to remit given numbers of vasectomies from their areas of operation, failing which punishments were to be meted out to them. Various coercive tactics were used to control the fertility levels, mainly though

Table 3
Family Planning Performance and Crude Birth rates in different
Plan Periods India (1956–97)

Plan & Period	Sterilizations (in' 000)			IUD (in' 000)	Equivalent CC Users period(%)	CEP by end of Period	CBR by the End of Plan
	Male	Female	Total	(in' 000)			
Second Plan 1/1956–12/1960	71 (46 4)	82 (53 6)	153 (100)	N A	N A	0 2	41 4
Third Plan 1/1961–3/1966	1069 (38 6)	305 (11 0)	1374 (49 6)	813 (29 4)	582 (21 0)	2 7	41 1 ^b
Interplan Period 4/1966–3/1969	3817 (51 5)	575 (7 8)	4392 (59 3)	2057 (27 7)	96 (13 0)	7 9	38 8 ^c
Fourth Plan 4/1969–3/1974	6571 (46 4)	2433 (17 2)	9004 (63 6)	2149 (15 2)	3010 (21 2)	14 7	34 5
Fifth Plan 4/1974–3/1978	8437 (45 8)	4795 (26 0)	13232 (71 8)	1946 (10 6)	3253 ^a (17 6)	22 5	33 3
Sixth Plan I 4/1978–3/1980	864 (7 9)	2398 (21 8)	3262 (29 7)	1186 (10 8)	6538 ^a (59 5)	22 3	34 0
Sixth Plan II 4/1980–3/1985	2808 (4 9)	14637 (25 6)	17445 (30 5)	7172 (12 6)	32502 ^a (56 9)	32 1	32 6
Seventh Plan I 4/1985–3/1990	3151 (2 8)	20582 (18 3)	23733 (21 1)	21353 (19 0)	67566 ^a (60 0)	43 3	30 2
Seventh Plan II 4/1990–3/1992	429 (0 8)	7787 (14 7)	8216 (15 5)	9756 (18 4)	35101 ^a (66 1)	43 6	29 2
Eighth Plan @ 4/1992–3/1996	568 (0 4)	17215 (13 6)	17783 (14 0)	24310 (19 2)	84541 ^a (66 8)	46 5	27 5 ^d

Note ^a Includes equivalent pill users also CC=Conventional contraceptives, CEP=Couples effectively protected, IUD=intrauterine device, N A=not applicable
 Figures in parantheses include percentage of total acceptors including sterilizations,IUDs and equivalent CC users
 b–Mid of 1961–71, c–For 1970, d–For 1996
 @ Data for the period 4/1992 to 3/1996

Source Year Books 1989–90 and 1994–95, Family Welfare Program in India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Family Welfare

increased number of vasectomies. The Commissioner for Family Planning at the center assumed enormous powers under the programme and the officials not only in the center but also in the states became powerful. The incentive payments to acceptors was substantially increased and related on a sliding scale to the number of living children a couple had at the time of accepting sterilization. Innovative political and fiscal incentives were offered by the center to the state governments to implement the family planning programme. Laws which made it compulsory for couples to stop reproduction after two or three children were beginning to be drafted and placed before state legislatures in Maharashtra and other states for enactment.

By a Constitutional Amendment, representations to parliament from each state were frozen at the 1971 census level upto the year 2001, making it politically unattractive for any state to increase its relative population size in the hope of securing greater political strength at the center. Vasectomies were conducted in railway stations, quickly arranged camp sites, and it is alleged that in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar men were forcibly subjected to sterilization. The strategy during this period can be termed as 'coercion'. However, news of these excesses leaked out very quickly through informal channels and there was general public agitation brewing up all over the country. The number of sterilizations done in India between April 1976 and March 1977 was 8.26 million, more than the total number done in the previous five years and more than the number done in any other country in the world until that time. The cost per sterilization was the lowest during the emergency period, at Rs 200 per sterilization compared to Rs 469 during 1973–74 and Rs. 751 during the post-emergency year 1977–78. Table 3 provides the per capita expenditure on the family planning programme and cost per sterilization equivalent over different years.

However, during the period of emergency, partly due to excesses in sterilization and partly for other reasons,

there was a large scale political unrest and general elections were called in February 1977. The elections brought defeat to the Congress Party at the centre and in most of the states. An oft-used cliché to characterise the comprehensive family planning programme during the emergency period was that instead of bringing down the birth rate rapidly, it brought down the government. It is surprising that under an authoritarian single party rule in China, the one child family norm, which is more stringent than the measures practised in India during the emergency period, is continuing to be practised for almost two decades, without any popular unrest or international condemnation, and conversely with unabated appreciation of China's achievements in the field of population control. Even in India, the Chinese achievements in the field of population control continue to be lauded and form the basis for judging India's performance as poor.

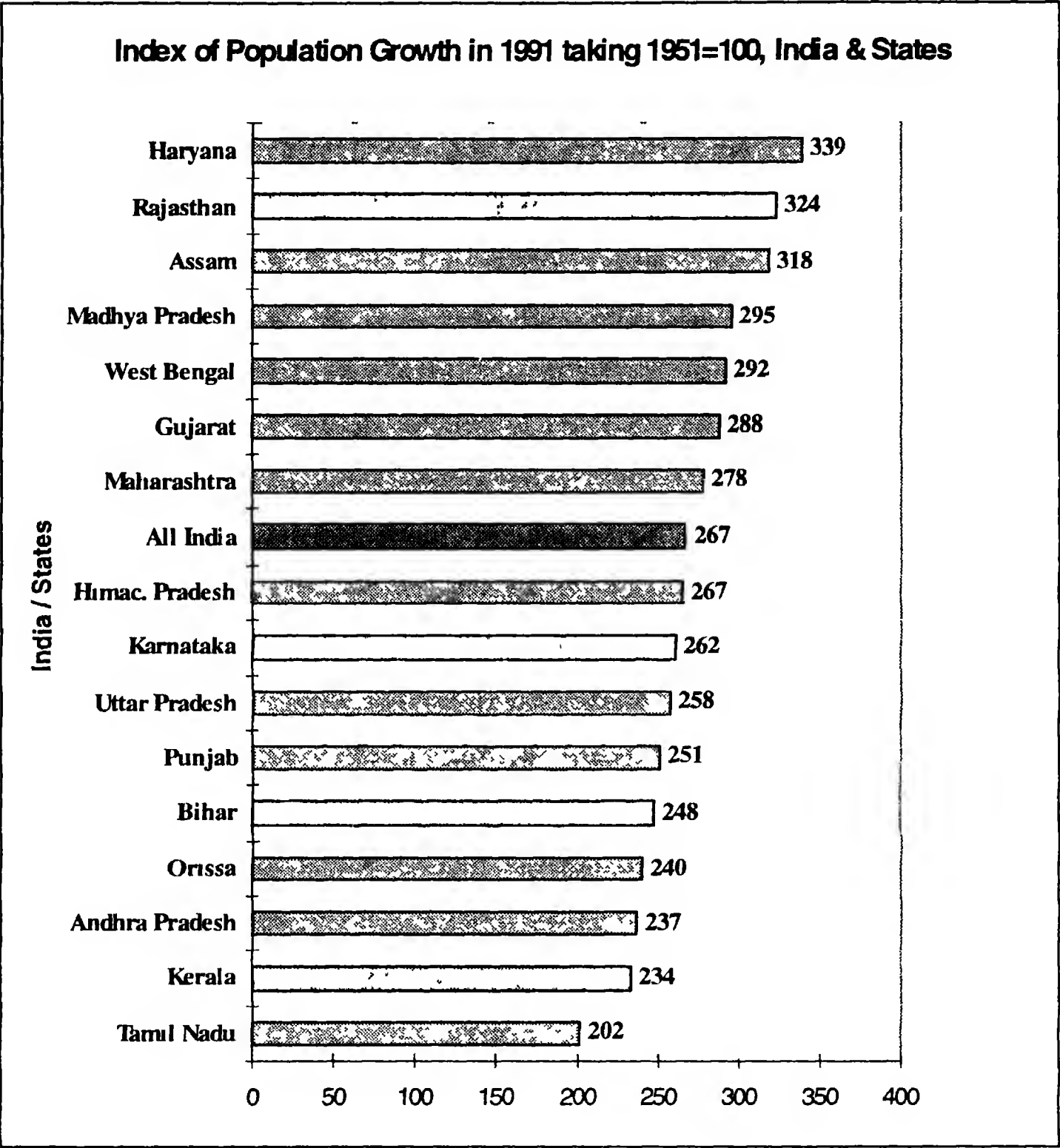
Post-Emergency Period: Recoil and Recovery Phase (1977-94)

There was a strong political reaction to the population policy of April 1976 and the coercive insistence on targets for vasectomy during the emergency period. The new government that assumed power in March 1977, changed the name of 'family planning' to 'family welfare', reduced the targets on sterilization and chose to achieve demographic change through a programme of education and motivation. A judicial commission was appointed to enquire into the wrong doings during the emergency period. A revised Population Policy adopted in 1977 was totally against compulsory sterilization and legislation of any kind and stated that 'compulsion in the area of family welfare must be ruled out for all times to come. Our approach is educational and wholly voluntary'. The 1977 policy was welcomed as a type of liberation for the expression of individual opinions and attitudes on family size and freedom of choice of contraceptive methods to be used by couples. The backlash on the earlier programme was felt severely on the number of vasectomies done in 1977-78 which was one fifth of the number performed in

the previous year, although the expenditure incurred in that year remained the same as in the previous year. The Chart-1 gives the trends in the levels of acceptance of different contraceptive methods in the country over the years. However, the new government enacted into law the proposal of the earlier government of raising the minimum age at marriage (18 for girls and 21 for boys) which came into operation in October 1978. During the provisional sixth plan period, 1978–79 and 1979–80, the programme expenditure was 2,260 million, almost equal to the amount spent in the previous two years. The period from 1977 to 1980 can be considered to be a recoil phase for the family planning programme.

The change of government again in January 1980 marked a turning point in the programme and helped to restore it to some extent with emphasis continuing on its voluntary nature. During the revised sixth five year plan (1980–85), a Working Group of Population Policy was set up by the Planning Commission to formulate long-term policy goals and programme targets for family welfare programmes. The long-term demographic goals were revised in terms of achieving Net Reproduction Rate (NRR-1) by the year 1996 for the country as a whole, on an average, and by the year 2001 in all the states. These goals are yet to be realised. It was assumed that fertility rates of a population are linked closely with the levels of development of the society, especially with female literacy and child mortality, and low fertility rates can be sustained only in the context of certain minimum levels of development and low mortality rates. These goals were translated into achieving a crude birth rate of 21, a crude death rate of 9, infant mortality rate of 60 and expectancy of life at birth of 64 years and contraceptive prevalence rate 60 per cent among eligible couples by modern methods of family planning to be achieved in all the states by the year 2000. The health-based, time-bound, target-oriented family planning programme was revived with reduced emphasis on sterilization and greater emphasis on spacing methods and on child survival programmes. These were to be implemented through all the sub-centres and Primary

Chart 3



Health Centres in the rural areas, without any aggressive campaigns or mass camps for sterilization as were adopted in earlier years. With greater assistance from international organisations, especially the UNICEF and the WHO, Universal Immunisation Programmes (UIP) and Expanded Programme of Immunisations (EPI) were launched in a systematic manner covering all the districts of the country in a phased manner. However, the post-emergency collapse of the family planning programme could never be revived fully in the subsequent years, especially in terms of acceptance of vasectomy by men as a good method of family planning. With men almost refusing to come forward for vasectomy, and motivations for family size limitations continuing to rise because of the information-education campaigns and lack of easy availability of spacing methods, tubal ligation of women began to rise steadily and became a dominant method of family planning during the next five years. During the sixth plan, an allocation of Rs.10,780 million were made in the sector of family welfare while the actual expenditure was higher at Rs 14,480 million. The sixth plan increased the per-capita expenditure on family planning to its highest since the implementation of the programme to Rs. 700 per sterilization equivalent.

The seventh plan implemented during 1986–91 continued the low key approach to family planning adopted in the sixth plan but witnessed a slow but steady increase in number of acceptors of female sterilization in family planning (See Chart 1). There was greater emphasis on spacing methods in this plan and incentives were offered to younger couples not to have more than two children to accept this method. Special programmes to reduce infant and child mortality rates through Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) started earlier were replaced by a more broader programme of Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM) implemented in collaboration with the UNICEF. However, the reduction in birth rates were smaller than anticipated in the seventh plan.

By the late eighties, it came to be recognised that the mortality and fertility levels in some states are declining rapidly, more rapidly than anticipated. The crude birth rate of Kerala which was 37 in 1966, came down to 26 in 1976 and to 20.3 by 1988, below the goal of 21—the replacement level of fertility, recommended in the sixth plan document. By 1986, the infant mortality has declined to 27 infant deaths per 1000 live births, well below the goal of 60 recommended to be reached by the year 2000. Similarly, Tamil Nadu reduced its birth rate from 33.6 in 1970–72 to 23.1 by 1989, though its infant mortality in that year was 68, much higher than that of Kerala. Clearly something striking was happening in terms of demographic transition in the southern states. This phenomenon attracted scholars from various disciplines to analyse the factors that were behind such a transition and whether these could be replicated or adapted to other areas of the country where fertility levels were declining more slowly.

A major change in the political scenario of the country was introduced by late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with the passing of Constitutional Amendments 72 and 73 and enactment of *Panchayati Raj* and *Nagar Palika* Acts in 1992, setting in motion the process of democratic decentralization. These acts ushered in a three-tier system of political governance in the country, central government, state government and the *panchayats* in the rural areas and the *nagar palikas* in the urban areas upto the district level. The primary health care including family planning, primary education and provision of certain basic amenities to the people such as drinking water and roads became the responsibility of the *panchayats*. Another notable feature of this act is the reservation of one third of the seats in *panchayats* for women members. Thus at the grass root level the women are politically empowered by this act to participate in all decision making issues pertaining to social development including family planning. This is great leap forward for the Indian democracy and empowerment of women. The process of this demographic decentralization is still going on with varying speed and

intensity in different states. Generally, the states are reluctant to share their powers and resources with the elected bodies of the *panchayats*. In some states, even the elections to the *panchayats* are yet to take place.

Family planning and primary health care, legally, are now in the domain of the *panchayats* and *nagar palikas*. This democratic decentralisation has further infringed on the powers of state government to impose any strong family planning programme through its Primary Health Centres and Sub-Centres.

Another notable development from the early 1990's has been organized intensification and expansion of the women's movements within the country and outside, questioning the policies and directions of the government with regard to family planning programme, in which women had to shoulder major responsibilities for fertility regulation and demographic transition. All family planning programmes, they argue, have been ultimately targeting women through propagation of female methods of family planning, in the context of a target-oriented and incentive based system. The preponderance of female sterilizations as the dominant method of family planning in the country, it was argued, was because of the pressure brought on women by the officials in the health departments who were keen to fulfil their quotas of family planning. This was, they said, tantamount to an infringement on their fundamental rights. Thus family planning programme landed itself in a quagmire where it could neither achieve its demographic goals of low fertility and population stabilization (through birth rate goals converted into family planning targets and pursuing these targets) nor withdraw from such a programme in the context of a continuing rise in the yearly additions to its population.

In this context, in July 1993 the Government of India appointed an expert group under the chairmanship of noted agricultural scientist, Dr. M S Swaminathan for drafting a National Population Policy for consideration of the government and adoption by Parliament. This committee, which submitted its report in 1994, recommended some basic

Table 4
Number of Parliament Seats at Present and likely number in future
(if 'freeze' is lifted)

	Actual	Actual	Likely number of seats if 'freeze' is lifted	
	1971	1991	2001	2016
<u>Major states</u>				
Andhra Pradesh	41	42	41	39
Assam	14	14	14	14
Bihar	53	54	54	56
Gujarat	24	26	26	26
Haryana	9	10	11	11
Karnataka	27	28	28	27
Kerala	19	20	17	16
Madhya Pradesh	37	40	43	44
Maharashtra	45	48	49	47
Orissa	20	21	19	18
Punjab	13	13	13	12
Rajasthan	23	25	29	30
Tamil Nadu	39	39	33	31
Uttar Pradesh	85	85	93	99
West Bengal	40	42	42	42
<u>Smaller states</u>				
Arunachal Pradesh	1	2	1	1
Goa	2	2	1	1
Himachal Pradesh	4	4	4	4
Jammu & Kashmir	6	6	5	5
Manipur	2	2	1	1
Meghalaya		2	1	1
Mizoram		1	1	1
Nagaland	1	1	1	1
Sikkim		1	1	1
Tripura	2	2	2	2
<u>Union Territories</u>				
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	1	1	1
Chandigarh	1	1	1	1
Dadra & Haveli	1	1	1	1
Daman & Diu	1	1	1	
Delhi	7	7	7	7
Lakshadweep	1	1	1	1
Pondicherry	1	1	1	1
Anglo Indians	2	2	2	2
Total	521	545	545	545

directions of the shift in the goals of population stabilization programmes and structurally organised motivations at various levels for their effective implementation. The recommendations are yet to be accepted by the Government.

Surprisingly, the goals on fertility, mortality and contraceptive use set during the eighth plan period (1992–97) on levels to be achieved by the end of the plan period have indeed been realised (See Table 1).

Reproductive and Child Health Approach (RCH), 1995 Onwards

The Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) approach to family planning and population stabilization owes its origin to the deliberations and recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), organized by the United Nations and held in Cairo in 1994. The Programme of Action formulated at the end of the conference and to which India is a signatory, postulated that population policies should be viewed as an integral part of programmes for women's development, women's rights, women's reproductive health, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Women's concern dominated the discussions at the Cairo conference, which felt that population policies which are based on macro demographic considerations and acceptor-target-driven programmes are unnecessarily and unevenly burdening women with the task of regulating reproduction to suit macro level policies. They argued that, henceforth, population policies should not be viewed with the sole concern of reductions in fertility rates considered desirable by planners and demographers, but by considerations of reproductive health, reproductive rights and gender equity. It was argued that developmental programmes which are not engendered are not only sustainable but also endangered. The Programme of Action adopted by the ICPD recommends a set of qualitative and quantitative development goals. They are:

sustained economic growth in the context of
sustainable development; education,

especially for girls; gender equity, equality and empowerment of women; infant, child and maternal mortality reduction; and the provision of universal access to reproductive health services, including family planning and sexual health.

The Government of India, which was a signatory to ICPD Programme of Action, promptly followed up on the recommendations by abolishing the acceptor based family planning targets since April 1995 in the country as a whole. It had already experimented with the 'target-free' approach in a few selected districts in the previous year, but the effectiveness of the approach was not properly assessed. Since 1997, officially, the Reproductive Health Approach has been adopted as the national policy of the Government of India. The official RCH programmes include the conventional maternal and child health services including immunization of children and contraceptive services to couples, treatment of reproductive tract infections (RTIS) and sexually transmitted diseases, provision of reproductive health education and services for adolescent boys and girls, screening of women near menopausal age for cervical and uterine cancer and treatment where required. The budget required for these additional services intended to be covered under reproductive health are quite high, but almost the same amount allocated in the earlier years for the programme has been allocated. It is feared that the emphasis on contraceptive services will get diluted when budgets are not adequately increased to cover the wider goals of RCH programmes. Population concerns go beyond reproductive health, though the latter is an important contributing factor for population stabilization.

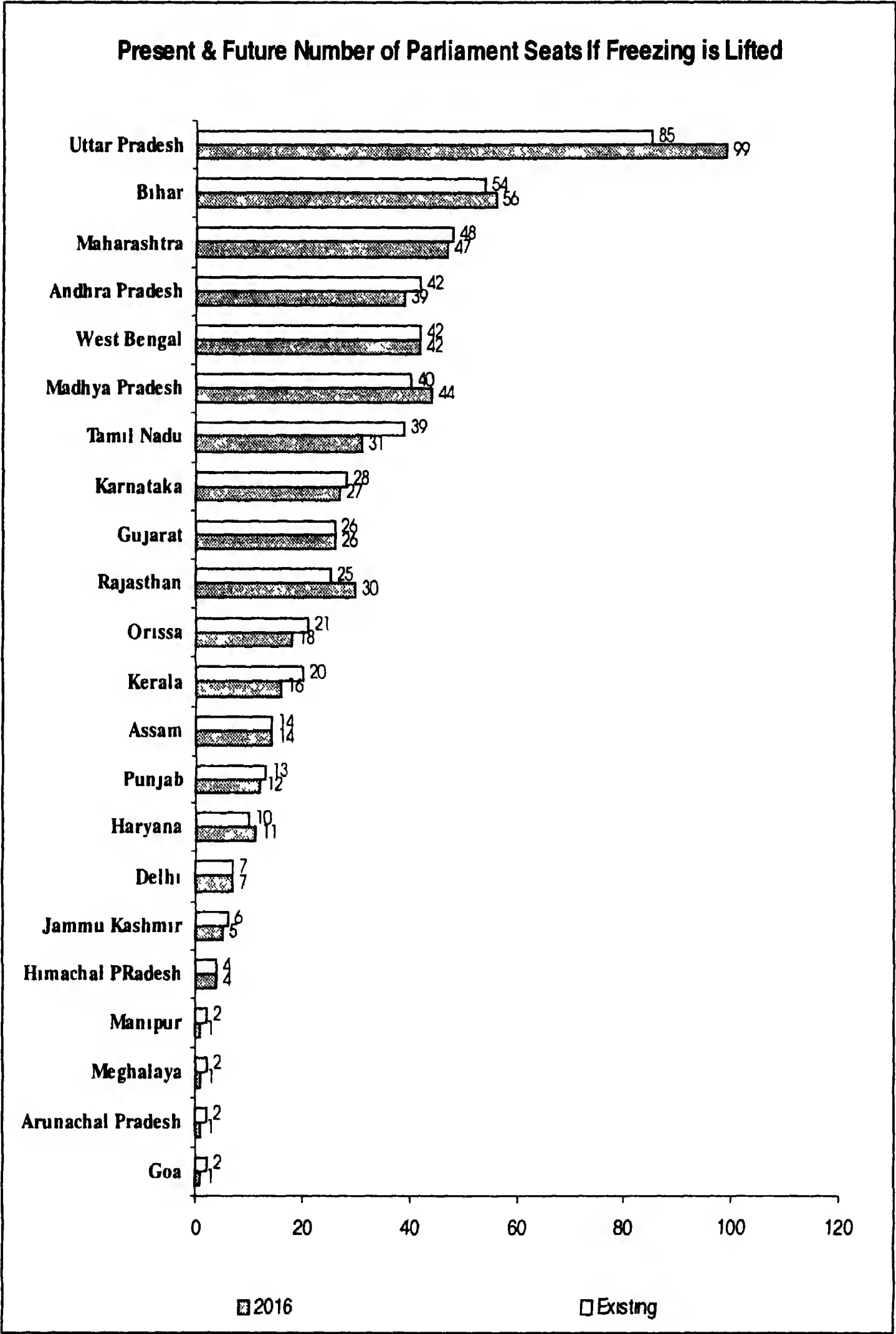
Political Implications of Sustained High Differential Growth of Population

The population of India as of mid-July 1998 has been estimated at 971 million (See Chart 2). With a birth rate of 27.5 and death rate of 9 for 1996, it is growing at 1.85

per cent per year, adding 18 million per year. Among the larger states, the growth rates vary from a low of 1.15 per cent and 1.22 per cent in Tamil Nadu and Kerala to high of 2.43 per cent and 2.33 per cent in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. These differentials in growth rates have been going on for the past two decades (See Chart 3 for indexed growth of the states from 1951 to 1991 with 1951 value as 100). Haryana has the highest index of 339 and Tamil Nadu the lowest at 202. The states have been growing at different rates. The political and socio-economic implications of the persistence of such high growth rates in some of the states is mind-boggling and the apathy of the leadership to this fundamental problem is appalling. The widening demographic diversity of India's population, especially between the southern and the northern states, are yet to be fully realized.

At the political level, with the universal adult franchise guaranteed to every citizen above 18 years of age, the states that have a higher rate of population growth will have proportionately a larger number of representatives in Parliament, and hence a better political leverage compared to the states which have a slower rate of growth of population. Indian leaders were aware of this problem and seem to have resolved it very wisely, by a Constitutional Amendment and an Act of Parliament in 1977, by which the number of representatives to Parliament from each state was frozen at the 1971 census level, and such a freeze will be in vogue until 2000. The constitution 42nd Amendment Act 1976, section 15, has specifically been made to ensure that those states that do well in family planning programmes and control their growth rates are not penalized by reduction in their representation to Parliament. As the law stands at present, from the year 2001, the figures of 2001 census can become the basis for reallocation of number of seats to Parliament from each of the states. If this is done U.P. is expected to gain 8 seats, from 85 to 93; Rajasthan 4 seats, from 25 to 29; Madhya Pradesh 3 seats, from 40 to 43; and Haryana 1 seat, from 10 to 11. On the other hand, the states that have been relatively successful in family planning programmes will

Chart -4



have less representatives in Parliament than they have now. Tamil Nadu will lose 6 seats, from 39 to 33; Kerala 4 seats, from 21 to 17; Andhra Pradesh 1 seat, from 42 to 41; and Manipur one seat, from 2 to 1. By the year 2016, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar will gain by 14, 5, 4 and 2 seats respectively and the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka will lose 8, 4, 3 and 1 seats respectively, compared to the 1991 levels. Table 4 and Chart 4 give the State-wise distribution of seats for the Lower House of Parliament (*Lok Sabha*) at present and how things will change if the present freeze is lifted by the year 2000 and the censuses of 2001 and 2011 are to form the basis for political representation in Parliament.

In the current context of a still widening growth differentials among the states as revealed by the 1991 census and the recent projections by the Technical Group of the Planning Commission, there is an urgent need for the continuation of the 1977 freeze on the representation to Parliament from different states for at least another 20 years i.e. upto 2018 or until the growth differentials narrow down whereby replacement levels of fertility is realized in every large state. This is a necessary political expediency not only to encourage accelerated demographic transition in the large Hindi speaking states but also to preserve the national integrity and not penalize the states that have successfully implemented the national population policy and achieved lower levels of population growth rates as stipulated in the various developmental plans.

Widening Interstate Disparities in Human Development

The Human Development Report (HDR) published by the UNDP in 1996 states that "Human Development is the end, economic growth a means" (UNDP, 1996). The HDRs of 1996 and earlier years have consistently defined the basic objectives of development as enlarging the choices of people primarily by providing them with education, health and employment opportunities. According to UNDP

Table 5
Human Development Index (HDI), India and Major States, 1995

India and States	Expectation of life at birth 1991-95	Index of life enrolment (I ₁)	Middle School literacy rate ratio, 1995	Projected adult (I) ² (15+), 1995	Index of education 1995-96	Per capita SDP (I) ³	Index of SDP Index	Human Development
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Persons								
India	60 3	58 79	62 3	51 5	55 10	9578	20 37	45
Andhra Pradesh	61 8	61 34	45 6	41 4	42 79	8615	18 16	41
Assam	55 7	51 22	71 8	51 9	58 50	6192	12 61	41
Bihar	59 3	57 12	35 5	35 9	35 78	4097	7 82	34
Gujarat	61 0	60 07	67 2	59 0	61 74	11036	23 71	49
Haryana	63 4	64 07	60 7	52 8	55 41	13770	29 97	50
Himachal Pradesh	64 5	65 81	79 3	63 3	68 63	8747	18 47	51
Karnataka	52 5	62 5	61 1	54 4	56 65	9004	19 06	46
Kerala	72 9	79 85	93 9	92 2	92 80	8324	17 50	63
Madhya Pradesh	54 7	49 56	61 8	43 5	49 57	6518	13 36	37
Maharashtra	64 8	66 29	81 6	64 2	70 02	15244	33 35	57
Orissa	56 5	52 52	54 9	48 2	50 42	6079	12 36	38
Punjab	67 2	70 4	52 9	58 0	59 66	15504	33 94	55
Rajasthan	59 1	56 84	56 2	38 3	44 24	6958	14 37	38
Tamil Nadu	63 3	63 84	91 2	59 0	69 73	9868	21 03	52
Uttar Pradesh	56 8	52 98	49 0	41 8	44 17	5983	12 14	36
West Bengal	62 1	61 78	87 1	59 1	68 44	7851	16 41	49

Source 1 Col 2, Life Tables 1991-95, Office of the Registrar General, India
2 Col 4, Selected Educational Statistics, 1996-97, Department of Education, Ministry of human Resource Development, Govt of India
3 Col 5, Projected by PFI based on 1971, 81 91 Census data
4 Col 7, Economic Survey 1997-98, Ministry of finance, Govt of India
Notes Index of e₀ (I₁) = (e₀ 25)/(80-25) * 100 Index of Education (I₂) = (2 * Adult Literacy Rate + middle school enrolment ratio)/3 * 100
Index of Income (I₃) = (SDP / GDP * 1400-100) / (6482-100) * 100 HDI = (I₁ + I₂ + I₃) / 3

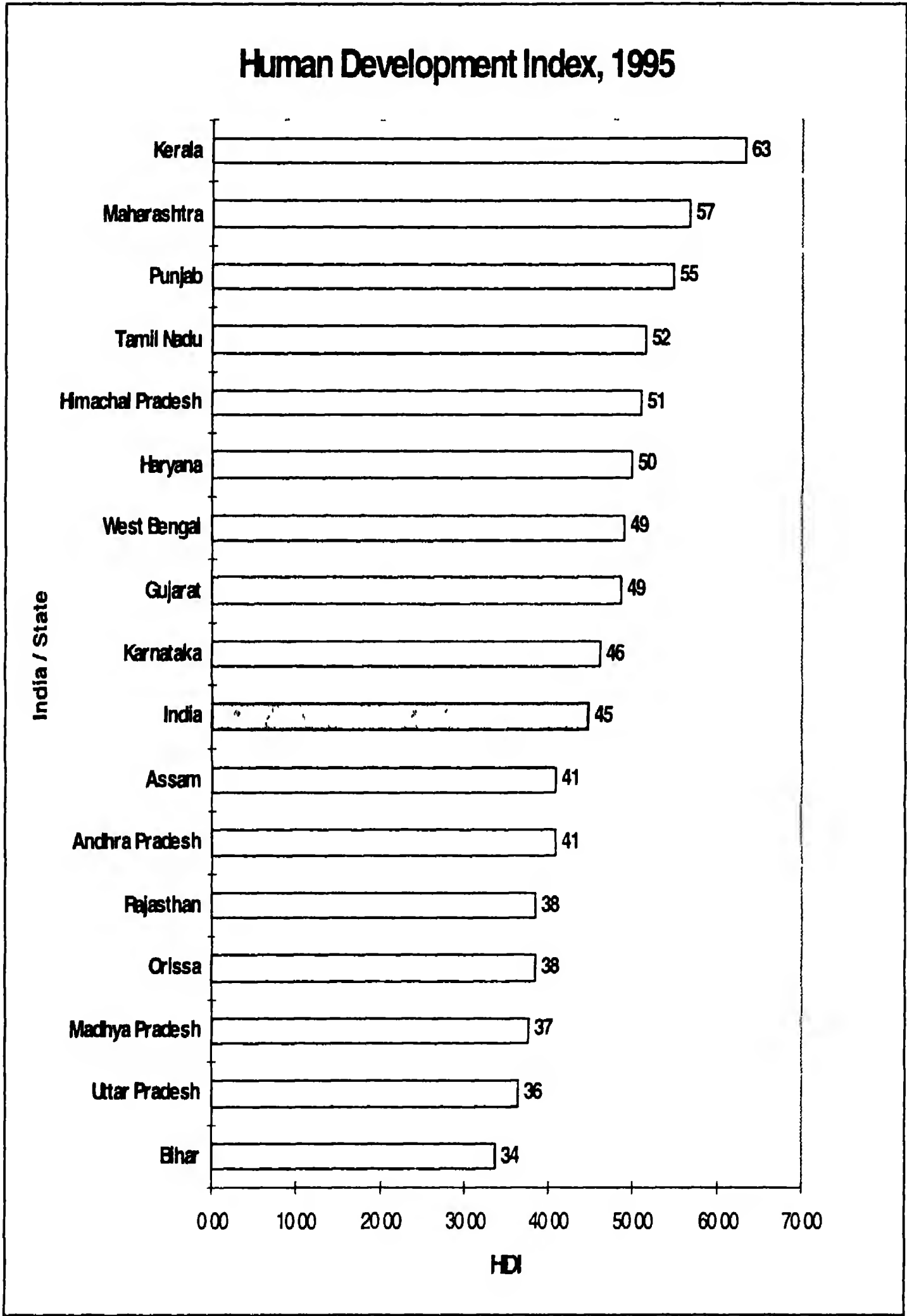
reports, human development has three essential qualitative components :

- a) equality of opportunity for all people in society;
- b) sustainability of such opportunities from one generation to the next; and
- c) empowerment of people so that they participate in and benefit from development process.

As a first step in capturing the combined effects of the above three components, UNDP has developed and advocated a number of indices, the primary one being the Human Development Index (HDI). This index attempts to measure a country's or an area's achievements in the enhancement of human capabilities. The HDI has undergone some modifications in its computation from year to year since 1990, when it was first introduced, but it includes three indicators : life expectancy at birth to measure the health status and longevity of people; educational attainment to represent the levels of knowledge and skills; and an appropriately adjusted real GDP per capita (in purchasing power parity—PPP—dollars) to serve as surrogate for command over resources. The HDR categorically identifies the above three parameters as essential, though not exhaustive, for choices at all levels of development. Many other opportunities remain inaccessible in their absence.

The Human Development Index (HDI) was computed by the Population Foundation of India for all the large states of the country for which data are available circa 1995 and are diagrammatically presented in Chart 5 (Population Foundation of India, 1998). It is a composite index ranging from 0 to 100, giving equal weightage to three component indices computed from the recent data on: (i) the expectation of life at birth (e_0) during 1991–95; (ii) the educational attainment of the population based on a combined measure of the projected adult literacy levels and the enrolment ratio in middle school in 1995; and (iii) the purchasing power-parity-price adjusted per capita net state domestic product for 1995 measured in dollar terms. The values on these component parameters and the index values computed for the major states are given in Table 5.

Chart-5



The procedures for the computation of HDI from these component values are identical to the procedures used in the UNDP report of 1996, excepting for school enrolment ratio. While the UNDP used the enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary levels, in this analysis we used the enrolment ratio only for the middle school level for which the data were considered to be the most reliable.

The HDI for India as a whole by this modification turned out to be 45 on a 0 to 100 scale, and close to the level of 44 given in the 1996 UNDP Report. India, with an HDI value of 45 ranks quite low in the comity of nations, with a rank of 135 among 174 countries studied by the UNDP. There is a good deal of variation in the HDI values across the states. Kerala with an HDI value of 63 ranks highest among the Indian states. In the international scene, its HDI score would place it at 105 in rank and above China and Egypt (with an HDI of 61). The lowest HDI values were observed in Bihar with a value of 34 and Uttar Pradesh at 36 and these values are comparable to the HDI value of Nepal (33) given in the 1996 HDR. These states will be ranked 150 and 151 at the international level. The states with HDI score of 50 and above are Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. The states having scores below 40 are the large Hindi speaking states of the north: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

As already mentioned, HDI is an equally weighted index of three components: index of life expectancy, index of educational attainment and index of parity adjusted per capita income. In these three components, the range of variation (in a score of 0 to 100) is from a maximum of 80 in Kerala to a minimum of 50 in Madhya Pradesh for life expectancy; from a maximum of 93 in Kerala to 36 in Bihar in terms of educational attainment and from a maximum of 34 in Punjab to a minimum of 8 in Bihar for parity price adjusted income (Table 5). Thus the variability is higher in terms of educational attainments than in the case life expectancy or per capita income. These data reinforce the need to achieve parity among the states in terms of

educational attainment i.e., adult literacy and educational enrolments as the priority item in human development, ranking higher than health and income. The correlation coefficient of HDI with the contraceptive protection rate and total fertility rate in 1995, taking the state as the unit of analysis were +0.76 and -0.75 respectively, and statistically significant implying that efforts at human development will have a significant payoff in terms of increased contraceptive use and reductions in fertility.

An Overview of Population Policies and Programmes Implemented

A critical study of the population policies and programmes adopted in India since 1951 reveals the following major deficiencies and possible corrective measures:

1. The programme placed almost a total emphasis on sterilization as the major method of family planning and the quality of services offered has been extremely poor. There is an urgent need to expand the range of choice of contraceptives and the quality of services to the couples. Though there are wide interstate differentials in these two aspects, generally the conditions are poor in most of the states and in the context of a very high level of unmet need for family planning, expressed by the women themselves in many sample surveys even in those states where fertility is very high, attention to these two aspects alone will help bring down fertility levels rather quickly. There is no need for slogans like 'one is fun' to motivate couples to adopt small family norm any more. The need of the hour is the offer of 'choice and service'.

2. Though the period of emergency witnessed unnecessary imposition of coercive methods of family planning and has been strongly criticised nationally and internationally, it also witnessed introduction and enactment of some far reaching legislations, such as the Minimum Age at Marriage Act and the freezing of the seats in Parliament and state legislatures on the basis of 1971 census until the year 2000, making it politically

unattractive for the states to have a higher rate of population growth. There is a need to extend this freeze till 2028 or till all the states reach the replacement level of fertility, whichever is earlier.

3. Until the sixth five year plan (1980–85), demographic goals were set in terms of crude birth rate and the target was set in terms of number of sterilization operations to be carried out on the basis of population size. These are no longer valid criteria for programme implementation. Though the target-free approach has come into vogue officially by orders from the center since April 1995, many states are continuing in their old groove of targets and sterilization, and state specific actions on this front are urgently called for. Because of the rigidity in the organizational pattern for maternal, child health and family planning programmes throughout the country and the strong insistence of the government at all levels (center, state and the district) on achieving the targets on sterilization, the delivery of maternal and child health services have suffered over the years. This has to be corrected.

4. The offer of incentives to acceptors, motivators, medical and paramedical personnel involved with the sterilization programme gave a commercial touch to the whole programme and in the hands of unscrupulous administrators many 'ineligible cases' were sterilized to gain monetary benefits at the individual or state level. On many occasions, in order to get awards from the central government as the best performing state in the family planning programme, the sterilization figures were manipulated. The quality of services at the time of sterilization and follow-up care for cases with complications left much to be desired. The programme lost much of its popularity among the people though the motivational and educational programmes on small family norms have been fairly successful. All incentives to acceptors should be in the form of high quality of services and range of choice and any incentive should be, if at all, to communities through developmental programmes.

5. The performance of the different states in family planning, even under a common population policy, organisational and scheme of financial assistance varied widely over the past three decades. States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra were most successful in their family planning programmes and reduction in the fertility level than states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. The factors underlying the differential performance of the states are the bureaucratic efficiency of the states; the political commitment to the programme at the state level and the progress of the states in selected areas of socio-economic development. Development in the education of females have been found to increase the desire for small family norm and demand for family planning methods.

6. The programme implicitly assumed that all married women in the reproductive ages are equal partners or contributors to the fertility of the population. No attempt was made to identify relatively more fecund couples and target the programme to them. Birth-based approach to family planning is likely to be more effective (Srinivasan and Rajaram, 1997).

7. Many authors have noted (Srinivasan, 1995; Narayana and Kantner, 1992) in their critical study of the population policy in India that the processes of decentralization of political power and decision-making through the *Panchayati Raj* system (wherein locally elected leaders at the level of a village or a group of villages are to be given authority to raise taxes, plan and implement local development programmes with assistance from higher levels) will eventually contribute to better quality of services, including health and family planning services. The experiences in this regard are yet to be gained.

8. Demographically, the impact of the programme on fertility has been towards reduction in the fertility rates among women above the age of 30, because of the emphasis on sterilization as the major method of family planning. The programme was nibbling, as it were, on the tail end of the fertility curve. The natural fertility or fertility of

women in the absence of contraception has been increasing during the past three decades among women below the age of 30 because of the forces of modernisation. We have thus a peculiar situation wherein the fertility rate of married women in the age group 20 to 29 has been increasing for the past three decades in a number of states, though significant declines in fertility have been observed only among women above the age of 30. The combination of these two factors have contributed to very slow decline in Total Fertility Rates (TFR) in some states, even in the context of a rise in contraceptive use. With increasing emphasis on spacing method and quality of care, we can hope to witness a more accelerated decline in fertility in the coming years.

9. The recent paradigm shift of the family planning programme as a part of the enlarged Reproductive Health and Child Services package is a welcome step in the right direction. This will enable the programme to care of women's health, especially their reproductive health, meet their unmet needs for family planning in terms of spacing of children and limitation of family size, treatment of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases and improve the quality of maternal and child health services. However, implementation of a larger package of services requires additional funds and commitment from the government. India barely spends eight percent of its GDP on essential health and education services, and the expenditure on family welfare is merely one percent of its GDP. India spends far less on its educational and health programmes than many other developing countries. Unless statements of intent on reproductive health are backed by higher financial commitments from the government to the social sectors, the great expectations can hardly be translated into tangible achievements. ▣

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HEALTH FOR ALL: 2000 AD

Avdesh Sharma

Twentieth century has seen rapid advances in the history of mankind. In the last fifty years *homo-sapiens* had to come to terms with the fact that most stable theories may undergo changes. This has not only changed technology, social structure and mindset of people but have shaken the basic foundations of several age-old institutions, systems and paradigms. Parameters of living and health care delivery systems have changed. Yet, the guiding light and the goal remains unchanged over a period of time i.e. best possible health for all. It is in this context that reflections on health in the past, present and future would be traced.

The world of forties was just recovering from the after effects of the second World War. It was ravaged by poverty, economic slowdown, empty coffers of governments, global mistrust, broken down systems, grief over death or loss of loved ones as well as malnutrition, disease and pestilence of myriad kinds. It was also a time of hope for the future to rebuild lives, society, countries and the world to a new social order. It was a time to give new momentum to the health care systems, to expand on what was learnt during the war and to build upon the existing discoveries in the pharmaceutical and health care industry. In 1946 the International Health Conference in New York approved the constitution of the World Health Organisation (WHO), which came into being on 7th April 1948. India become a member of WHO in the first year of its existence.

After gaining Independence on 15th August 1947 India faced many challenges, especially in the development of infrastructure and implementation of welfare schemes on health, education and poverty alleviation. It is important to realise that status of health in India at the time of Independence was moulded by many *factors*:

India's health was managed by indigenous systems of medicine like *Ayurveda*, *Yoga*, *Naturopathy* and *Sidha*. Later, *Unani* and Homeopathy came in. These systems had strong preventive and life style prescriptions for living and an intricate method of treatment for illnesses prevalent in those times.

The British introduced the Allopathy system of medicine to this country, which is now referred to as 'modern medicine'. The system had few medicines as we know them today but was based mainly on sanitation and prevention as well as medical and surgical practices. The indigenous systems of medicine were not encouraged by the British rulers and slowly withered away except in small pockets.

India consisted of 'British India' *and* the 'Princely States'. The British government and its administrative and bureaucratic setup provided medical treatment to the 'gentry' and the 'commoner' depending on their status and socioeconomic background. The Princely states, excepting a handful, did not have much to offer to their people. The kings and the courtiers sought treatment from centres of excellence in major metros like Lahore, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta or abroad. The common man in most cases depended on his own resistance or 'God's intent' to fight diseases.

In the pre-Independence united India, the infrastructure, network and heritage of professionals, knowledge and resources belonged to the whole region. The partition, which was more on religious and geographical grounds, left a broken down structure of health, water resources, communication, transportation, electricity and education.

The health care delivery system apart from other needs like water, sanitation, proper food and housing was distributed on the basis of caste, religion and sex.

The Indian population was divided into those working for the British Regime and thus in a position to avail of the health care delivery system offered by it and those dependent on their own resources like local *vaid*s/*shamans* and old wives's tales, which were quite popular and mainstay of treatments.

There were hardly any associated factors for illnesses like pollution, adulteration, stress or life style factors in comparison to the present times.

Around the time of Independence, the Indian people, devastated as they were by riots, floods and famine, had to depend on their own resources to fight diseases and hunger. Yet, there was a sense of euphoria and determination to steer the country towards self reliance. The most common diseases afflicting the people were Malaria, Small Pox, Leprosy, Tuberculosis, Polio, Measles, Guinea-worm, filaria, Plague, Gastroenteritis, Cholera, Whooping Cough, Kala Azar, sexually transmitted diseases and Rheumatic fever as well as malnutrition and lack of sanitation and potable water. Some of these diseases were endemic in nature while some other came in the form epidemics.

Between 1947 and 1950—when India become a Republic—an effort was made to take stock of the existing facilities in the health and education sector formulate future policies. The agenda was shaped by the Bhore Committee (Health Survey and Development committee) report (1946) and Sokhey Committee (Sub Committee of the National Planning committee). These committees outlined the following parameters:

- It is the duty of the government to provide health to all its citizens including those in villages.
- All should get health care irrespective of his/her ability to pay.
- Community support and action for proper planning and utilization of the services including setting up of



Immunization campaigns have yielded good results

community health committees to look after health, sanitation and environment.

- Setting up of Primary Health Care Centres to provide basic health services.
- Integration of modern system of medicine with traditional and indigenous systems so that people have a choice and the available resources utilized optimally.

All over the world, rapid strides were made in medical science. New theories of disease causation leading to treatment were discovered, new compounds and medicines for treatment and new technologies were introduced. India being a member of the WHO and a developing country was trying its best to integrate these new discoveries and technologies into its health care delivery system. Rapid progress in other areas like education, communication, transportation, power generation, supply of potable drinking water and waste disposable systems, as well as the green revolution in agriculture went a long way in consolidating the advances in the health sector. This was aided to a great extent by a democratic political system and responsible administration and the determination of the country to rid itself of ignorance, poverty and illness.

The policies of and the plans for funding the health sector were outlined by the five year plans. It was during the first five year plan that the work on setting up Primary health centres and sub-centres started. This was conceived as a multi tiered system of Sub Centres → Primary Health Centres → Community Health Centres → Referral Centres. The work has progressed well to cover the entire country and at present, there are 1,32,730 sub centres for a population of 5000 each (3000 in the case of remote and SC/ST/Tribal areas), 21,854 Primary Health Centres for a population of 30,000 each and around 2424 community health centres for a population of 1,20,000 each. It was envisaged that the services provided by the health care infrastructure should be **accessible** to the people, **available** on a continuous basis, **acceptable** culturally and socially and **affordable** by most of the people. Unfortunately, certain problems have been noticed in the functioning of the sub-centres, P.H.C., C.H.C. and hospitals:

- Only 6.1 per cent urban and 8.1 per cent rural population sought treatment from Primary Health Centres while 22.5 per cent urban and 21.3 per cent rural population obtained treatment from private clinics. Paradoxically, low income groups utilized the primary health centres less than the high income groups. People generally from all income groups in both urban and rural areas relied more on medical shops and chemists or self medication.
- Low contact rates both in rural and urban areas reduced the cost-effectiveness of the health centres which mostly remained under-utilized.
- Comparatively lesser number of women and female children utilized these facilities.
- Large number of posts of pharmacists, radiographers, laboratory technicians, male multipurpose workers and specialists in these health centres remained vacant, particularly rural areas.
- Skewed rural urban population of doctors—while 75 per cent of our population lives in villages about 80 per cent of the doctors are in urban areas.
- Unavailability of or 'useless' medicines provided by these centres.

Allopathic system of medicine preferred by three quarters of individuals reporting illness followed by Homeopathic (10.9 per cent urban and 2.9 per cent in rural), *Ayurvedic* (8.1 per cent in rural and 3.9 per cent in urban). Considering the fact that a large number of personnel have been recruited from the Indian Systems of Medicine, this means unutilized services. Meagre comparable resources and funds provided to Indian Systems of Medicine translate into skewed utilization of services.

Lack of participation of the local population in decision-making regarding perceived problems and priorities, budget allocation and running of the centres. This is being rectified to some extent by the involvement of *Panchayats* in the functioning of these units.

Corruption and red tapism leading to wasteful and cost-ineffective expenditure.

New technology and methods of treatment did not reached the health centres at the desired speed.

While formulating policies for the health services, it was found that a few communicable and non-communicable diseases formed a major chunk of illnesses in the population. Health has been a Central as well as State subject. The Central Government under the aegis of Ministry of Health took concerted measures to combat these diseases and launched several National health Programmes, which helped improve the quality of life of the common man.

National Malaria Eradication Programme (NMEP) The World's biggest health programme against a single communicable disease was started in 1958 (earlier known as the National Malaria Control Programme) and has brought down incidence of Malaria from 750 lakh in 1947 to about 1 lakh in 1965 and the number of deaths due to malaria came down significantly. However, the achievements could not be sustained leading to resurgence of the disease, specially the *falciparum* variety. A modified plan of operation was initiated in April, 1977. During 1996, 2.87 million cases were reported of which 1.11 million were due to *Plasmodium falciparum*.

National Filaria Control programme was launched in 1955 and covers the 42 crore people living in 178 known endemic districts. Of this, 4.7 crore people in urban areas are being protected through antilarval measures by 206 control units and 198 clinics.

Kala-Azar: National programme for this health problem, endemic in Bihar and West Bengal, was provided for by the Government of India from National Malaria Eradication Programme including insecticides and anti Kala-Azar drugs and technical guidance to the affected states.

Dengue: A viral disease occurring particularly in urban areas. After the 1996 out break in Delhi, guidelines for contingency plan have been made for states for surveillance, prevention and treatment.

Japanese Encephalitis: Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and U.P. report maximum cases of deaths due to Japanese Encephalitis (caused by a minute virus and spread by mosquitoes, it has a high mortality rate of 30–45 per cent). In 1996, 1552 cases and 432 deaths were reported but a vaccine has been developed indigenously by the Central Research Institute, Kasauli.

Tuberculosis: It is estimated that there are about 12–14 million TB patients in the country, of which three million cases are highly infectious and sputum positive. Every year nearly 2–2.5 million new TB cases are reported in the country and about half a million die due to the disease. The disease difficult to treat due to premature stoppage of treatment, drug resistance and HIV-TB connection. The programme is in operation since 1962 and is integrated with General Health Services. It is aimed at early detection and effective treatment till cure. The National TB Control programme is implemented through the District Tuberculosis Centers (DTC) as well as Peripheral Health Institutions (PHI's) and presently revised strategy for Directly Observed Treatment Short Course (DOTSC) is being implemented.

National Leprosy Eradication Programme was started in 1955 as Leprosy Control Programme (India ranked first among leprosy patients in the world having about 58 per cent cases), it was changed to an eradication programme in 1982–83 as a 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme. It has the specific goal of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem by 2000 A.D. Until March 1997, 778 leprosy control units, 907 urban leprosy units; 290 temporary hospitalization wards; 278 district leprosy units; 5744 Survey, Education and Treatment (SET) centers, 40 leprosy training centers and 40 sample survey cum assessment units and 350 mobile leprosy treatment units apart from 285 voluntary organizations have been established in various states and union territories under the programme. These provides Multi Drug Treatment (MDT) to 5.49 lakh recorded cases.

National Programme for control of Blindness: Launched in 1976 as a 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme to cater to six million (of the 30 million worldwide) blinds in India. The prevalence of blindness (12 million economically blind in India 80 per cent of which is due to cataract) is 1.49 per cent and the target under this programme is to reduce this figure to 0.3 per cent by 2000 A.D. The activities under this programme are yet to show an impact, specially in rural areas despite 30 control mobile units and 301 district mobile units apart from services in hospitals and health centers.

Nation Goitre Control Programme was launched in 1962 and changed to National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme (NIDDCP) in 1992 to tackle this major health problem. It has been found that of the 275 districts in 25 states and four union territories, 235 are endemic for Iodine Deficiency Disease (IDD) (prevalence rate more than 10 per cent, 67 million suffering from the disorder). The programmes provides iodized salt to the entire country apart from other services for identification and treatment.

National AIDS Control Programme: Launched in 1992, the sexually transmitted diseases programme has been merged with it. The emphasis is on training, research and epidemiology, treatment of STD's, health education as well as provision of safe blood under the aegis of National AIDS Control Organization (NACO).

National Cancer Control Programme was started in 1975 and revised in 1984. It provides health education, early detection and comprehensive treatment including palliative care to about 15–20 lakh cases of cancer of which six lakh new cases occur every year. It is done through Regional Cancer Centers, District Cancer Control programmes, development of oncology wings, financial assistance to voluntary organizations and cobalt therapy installations.

National Guinea Worm Eradication Programme: After successfully eradicating small pox from India in 1977, India became the first country in the world to launch eradication programme against guinea worm in 1983–84. The country

has achieved near zero guinea worm disease status by 1996 (a disease affecting mainly rural areas where safe drinking water is not available) and no new case was reported in 1997 (compared to 40,000 cases in 1984).

Yaws Eradication Programme: It was approved as a pilot project in 1996–97 for tribal areas of the country in Orissa and is now being extended to other states through detection of cases, treatment and health education.

National Diabetes Control Programme was started as a pilot project during the seventh five year plan in some districts of Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka but due to paucity of funds in subsequent years, could not be expanded further.

National Mental Health Programme: was started in 1982 to meet time-bound targets which unfortunately have not been met. In 1995, it was decided to revitalize and revamp the programme by adopting the District Mental Health Programme in a quarter of the districts in the country, introducing the community Mental Health approach and upgrading living conditions in Mental Hospitals.

National Disease Surveillance Programme (NDSP): The National Institute of Communicable diseases as the nodal agency has been entrusted with the task to prevent, control and monitor outbreak of diseases.

Pilot Projects on Oral Health, Control of Cardiovascular Diseases and stroke, Programme Against Micro nutrient, Malnutrition and fortification of staple food have been at various stages of development.

A detailed report on comprehensive *National Programme on Sanitation and Environmental Hygiene* by Dayal Committee was submitted which would form the basis for formulation of policies during the ninth five year plan.

Our country has seen many disasters, both natural like floods, earthquakes and landslides and man made like the Bhopal Gas tragedy. There has been no concerted effort to tackle health problems arising out of such calamities.

The national programmes have been an excellent idea and some of them have produced impressive results

although some others have been marred by numerous inadequacies. The ground reality is that a lot of other countries have achieved these results much more successfully and in a much shorter time frame. Some of the programmes have become 'white elephants' plagued by overzealous staff who believed in achieving targets on paper, wastage of expensive equipment and medicines, unimaginative style of functioning and lack of coordination between parallel agencies, policy makers and ground staff. It should also be kept in mind governmental efforts are being supplemented by NGOs and the private sector. Thus the present situation is far better than what it would have been, had there been only Government sponsored programmes.

The programme implementation of any ministry is carried out by trained professionals and it was important to introduce Technical, Medical and Paramedical Education for this purpose. It is unfortunate that our country has not been able to make inroads into the education sector (more than half of our population is illiterate; minorities, tribals, women and those from rural areas being the worst hit). With even the primary health education in disarray, availability and standard of higher and technical education have been far less satisfactory. It is unfortunate that we have not been able to provide equal opportunities to all to study and then provide services to the community from which they have come. The country has been steadily increasing the number of institutions providing medical and paramedical education. The standards of these institutions differ as do their availability to the 'common man with merit'.

In 1951, there were 17 medical colleges with an annual turnout of 1400 doctors and the country had 61,480 doctors, 3290 dentists and 16,550 nurses. In 1951, there were 2694 hospitals, 5306 dispensaries, 1,17,178 hospital beds with a beds per lakh of population ratio of 32.

The Parliament, on 2nd April 1993 amended the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 to provide seeking of prior permission of the Central Government before establishing



Over-crowded health centres

an institution imparting education in medical sciences, increasing the intake of students or introducing a new or higher course of study. The medical, paramedical and technical studies in India are highly subsidized by the government and thus must be properly utilized for the society.

At present there are 164 medical colleges in the country, out of which 148 have been recognized by the Medical Council of India. Of these, 105 are government medical colleges and remaining 43 are private with combined annual admission capacity of about 17,000 students. There are 514 ANM (Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) schools attached to the district hospitals and PHCs, 487 schools of General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), 19 colleges of Nursing for BSc. Nursing, 8 colleges providing Master's degree in Nursing and two colleges providing M.Phil/PhD in Nursing. Presently 94 dental colleges are functioning with an admission capacity of 4,845 students in BDS courses apart from MDS (Masters) course. Similarly, there are 327 institutions imparting diploma in pharmacy to 19,016 students per annum and 78 institutions imparting degree to 3637 students. There are also courses for laboratory and x-ray technicians, those involved in biotechnology, medical records, and statistics.

There are, currently more than 4,89,189 doctors, 1,13,000 dentists, 5,65,696 nurses, 2,83,168 auxiliary nurse midwife and 26,578 health visitors in the country apart from 13,692 hospitals, 28,321 dispensaries, 5,96,203 hospital beds and a beds per lakh population ratio of 70.

There have been considerable emphasis on the type of doctors required and concepts of social physician (Bhore committee 1946, Mudaliar Report, 1961), the basic doctor (Patel Report 1970), family and community oriented general practitioners with social responsibility (Srivastava Report, 1975), the community oriented physician for comprehensive health care (ICSSR-ICMR, 1981), and the community physician (NEPHS, 1990) have been advocated.

However, despite greater clarity in the stated goals of policy, the phenomenal quantitative growth of the

institutional framework, efforts to qualitatively reorient the curriculum to match policy goals, and the growing populist rhetoric of doctors for the villages, medical education has moved towards greater and greater crisis. This is illustrated by the fact that a majority of young medical graduates still opt for urban hospitals and clinical practice, the trend towards specialization is high the vacancies in rural health centers have reached significantly disastrous proportions,

Professional interest, both at the level of the practitioner and educator continues to be illness care at the secondary and tertiary level, rather than in the challenges of primary health care and public health, which emphasize primary prevention. The increasing commercialization, privatization and erosion of norms in medical ethics also underscore the point. In addition, the problem of full-time teachers being involved in private practice and the growth of the doctor-drug producer nexus continue to plague the system. Brain-drain was estimated to have reached an alarming 30 percent of annual output in 1986–97. However, this problem has recently been overshadowed by a new phenomenon—the increasing investment in private, high technology diagnostic centers by Non-Resident Indian (NRI) doctors and businessmen—which is being portrayed as an ‘altruistic process’. In reality, this is turning out to be a market driven economic process, supported by the medical-industrial complex of the west in search of new markets!

Similar issues continue to bog down the health care delivery systems in the country. We see flash strikes, malpractices, non-implementation of policies, bad working conditions and lack of concern for work or patient care and lack of respect to the medical profession as well as professionals. A general mistrust of each other whether between doctor-patient, staff-administrator, technocrat-bureaucrat, government hospital-private hospital continues to affect the system tottering under its own weight. Over and above all, a steadily growing population stifles an already overburdened health care system.

We can also be proud of our achievements. We produce some of the best professionals in the world. Indian health care professionals have done India proud in other countries. Our scientists in health care systems, doctors and nurses hold positions of high esteem in international and foreign fora. The technological advances coming to India from Non-Resident Indians and multinationals can make India boast of providing the best possible world class health care facilities within the country, for a price of course! Indeed, the price may not be very high in dollar terms yet in a health care delivery system where each person pays for health from his pocket in a private set up (the concept of insured health sector or socialized medicine not yet a reality in India), the pinch causes pain and tears!

India can boast of many National Institutes, laboratories of international fame, Councils like Medical Council of India, Nursing Council of India, Dental Council of India, Indian Council of Medical Research and many more institutions overseeing the work of a giant health care delivery system under the aegis of central and state health ministries. There are also many institutions set up in collaboration with foreign countries, the World Bank, W.H.O., United Nations to oversee the National and international health programmes functioning in the country. The Non-Governmental (NGO) sector is equally responsive and vibrant

India has many other health resources and schemes. There are health schemes for the Central Government Employees (CGHS) and state government employees, Employees State Insurance (ESI) hospitals and hospitals for employees of ministries like Railways and Coal apart from hospitals in industrial towns and those set up by voluntary agencies with support from international funding agencies and Central and State Governments.

We have also come a long way in the pharmaceutical sector from 1947 when most of the medicines (whatever few were there in the world) were imported as finished formulations in few factories. There has been a

tremendous growth since then of public and private sector units, making raw material and formulations. Presently we are self-sufficient in essential drugs and have started exporting drugs. Yet, we are producing too many irrational, irrelevant and at times dangerous formulations. The structure for ensuring the quality of pharmaceutical products is too fragile to keep an effective check. There are stringent laws to prevent adulteration of medicines and other malpractices but unfortunately their implementation is faulty. This paves the way for over-the-counter sale of all types of medicines including restricted ones.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in the Indian systems of Medicine. India has had an elaborate system of indigenous medicines, which had stopped growing in the early years of Independence but has now started coming into the mainstream. Ironically, the Indian systems of Medicine (*Ayurveda*, *Unani*, *Siddha*, *Yoga* and *Naturopathy*) along with Homeopathy started coming into limelight as people started using them for their cost-effectiveness, to escape the 'side-effects' of the modern system of medicine and due to the interest shown by the western countries towards their preventive and curative effects. A separate department of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy in the Central Ministry of Health was set up in 1995. There are about 123 colleges for teaching *Ayurveda*, 146 for Homeopathy, 40 for *Unani*, apart from 28,000 dispensaries and 6500 hospitals where treatment is done under these systems of medicine. Besides, there are National Institutes of excellence for each of these systems and a large number of medical practitioners in the private sector. Several research institutes for treating chronic diseases through Indian Systems of Medicines have been set up. There are, however, some problems about these systems which need to be sorted out if these systems are to grow. There is no unanimity about treatment modalities, quality control of formulations is poor, claims of treatment are not backed

by scientific research and often the limits of treatment are not observed leading at times to fatal consequences.

It is also important to note that a lot of *quacks* masquerading as doctors have been playing with the lives of our countrymen. (One estimate puts the number of quacks as equal to the number of professional practitioners). Some of the practices of *Shamanism*, faith healing and black magic lead to untold misery and disability apart from economic burden to the sick individual and the family. This may take grotesque forms when these practices are carried out in the name of God or from established religious institutions leading to harassment of the patient and creating institutionalized misinformation on health which is very difficult to fight.

The disabled in the country have been given a legislation to fight for their rights with the Disability Act of 1996 and the Rehabilitation Council of India Act of 1992. The provisions of this act provide for medical, vocational and social rehabilitation of the disabled apart from other benefits like income tax rebate, job reservations, soft loans, petrol and vehicles at cheaper prices etc. The rehabilitation industry has made great progress to provide cost effective, indigenized aids for those with disability. Yet, the laws have not been implemented well enough. Those with disabilities are yet to become a part of the mainstream and seen as needing piety of the society.

Certain sections of the society have been treated like disabled despite no fault of theirs. The health care delivery systems have marginalized rural population compared to the urban, the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled tribes compared to other castes, females compared to males and people from low income groups compared to those from middle and higher income groups. There are huge differences even at the level of states with some states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh lagging behind the national norms in almost all health indices. This is true of the seven states of the North East. Some states like Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have done very well in providing

health care delivery systems for their people, overtaking the national norms by large margins. Thus, we have done very well in some areas but badly in others. The need is to learn from our past mistakes, bridge the gaps between different health care delivery systems available to different section of the society and set realistic targets for the future. We have the infrastructure, committed and trained man power and the ability to turn these goals into realities. It would be then that we would live up to the definition of Health as envisaged by W.H.O. "Health is a positive state of Physical, Mental, Social and Spiritual Well being and not merely the absence of Disease". □

HIGHER EDUCATION

Pabitra Sarkar

The year of India's independence marks the beginning of many changes in the inner and outer realities of the Indian subcontinent. What, however, is more important from our point of view is that the year also signals a divide in the planning and implementation process of Indian education, including higher education. If one says that before 1947 it was the colonial rulers who decided what Indians should study and learn, after independence it is Indians themselves who started taking these decisions, one could not be far from the truth, although that would be a rather simplified truth. Processes of history do not emerge and move in a unilinear direction without other processes interacting, or even conflicting with them. The colonial policy of education, designed and conducted with the objective of consolidating the base of an empire, had lately begun to contend with a clamour for a 'national' education the Indians. The dialectical discourse that arose in this area had two distinct aspects. One was reflected in the proposals for an alternative education, or as one could say, a 'counter-colonial' education that sought to build new and 'national' institutions which would provide 'national education', that is, education that would suit the dreams and aspirations of people who had just begun to perceive themselves as a nation and were eager to find themselves placed outside the colonial ambience. The move by Rabindranath Tagore in 1900 to establish *Brahmacharyashrama* at Santiniketan, a children's school planned after ancient

Indian ideals, the efforts of the National Council of Education of Bengal during 1905–12, the establishment of the National Muslim University at Aligarh, the Gujarat Vidyapith at Ahmedabad, and other institutions like the Bihar National University, the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith, the Quami Vidyapith and a large number of national schools on the basis of a resolution taken at the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Nagpur in 1920, are indications of this search for education with an Indian identity.¹

There was another aspect of this protest against colonial education, which seems to have been carried on from within the system. Indian vice chancellors to the universities of the country were being appointed from 1890, which means that qualified Indians were being inducted into the charmed circle of policy makers in higher education. These vice chancellors, with varying personal styles and motivations, began a campaign of their own for widening the scope for Indian students intent on entering the universities. While Gokhale's repeated attempts at having his Elementary Compulsory Education Bill passed (... "We of the present generation of India, can only hope to serve the country by our failures")² were directed towards changing the system, Mahatma Gandhi's Wardha Scheme as well as Basic education proposals strove to build up other alternative systems. This dialectic between the colonial designs of education and those of its prospective users shaped the growth of higher education till 1947. While the whole of the nineteenth century witnessed the establishment of only five universities and an equal number of institutions for imparting engineering and technological education, India had, by 1947, another 13 universities and 46 institutions for higher and technical education (Kulandai Swamy, 1995:51). It was clear that in matters of education, the colonial rulers were losing control, and the country was asserting its own perceptions about its needs.

What happened after 1947 is little less than a quantum jump—an unprecedented expansion of education

opportunities which could not have been anticipated from the slow growth of the earlier years. The massive progress of Indian education including higher education during the last half-century has few parallels in history. This progress has to be measured in terms of both, quantity and quality. If we take up the matter of quantity first, it is for everyone to see that there has been an impressive proliferation in the number of institutions of higher education, a large broadening of its base which makes the opportunities available before independence look meagre and skimpy. However, the post-independence scenario of higher education cannot simply be characterized in terms of ‘more’. India now has the world’s largest higher education system. But it is not just a case of cumulative aggregation of institutions. The scene is marked by considerable diversity of opportunities offered. A particular emphasis has been laid on science, engineering and technological education as well as research, the results of which are now prominently visible in the space and nuclear programmes of the country, as in others, which are perhaps less glamorous but no less crucial. That India has built up the world’s third largest scientific and technological force is another distinguished outcome of this diversification of higher education.³ The following tables will show the kind of growth that has been evident in the sphere of higher education and the sweep the system has been able to establish over higher education. The principles of equality and access, upheld by numerous commissions, committees, study teams, as by policy statements⁴ seem to be at work and have made an impact on the evolution of the system.

Table 1
Institutions

Year	General Degree Colleges	Professional Colleges	Universities
1947	459	132	18
1996	6569	1354	229

Table 2
Students Enrolment in General Degree Colleges
Gender Distribution

Year	Male	Female	Ratio
1947	1,63,511	19,727	8.29:1
1996	31,30,240	18,53,049	1.69:1

Table 3
Students Enrolment in Professional Degree
Colleges Gender Distribution

Year	Male	Female	Ratio
1957*	1,81,877	18,223	9.98:1
1996	4,16,126	1,33,543	3.12:1

Table 4
SC/ST Students in General Higher Education

Year	Male	Female	Total	Ratio
1957†	84, 693	6,397	91,090	13.24:1
1996	4,40,739	1,69,770	6,10,509	26.00:1

Table 5
SC/ST Students in Professional/Special Higher
Education Gender Distribution

Year	Male	Female	Total	Ratio
1957*	13,886	1,978	15,864	7.02:1
1996	42,954	13,647	56,601	3.15:1

Table 6
General Category and SC/ST Students in General
Higher Education

Year	General	SC/ST	Total	Ratio
1957	570.885	91,090	661,975	6.25:1
1996	4372,820	610,509	4983,329	7.16:1

* In 1947, 45643 students were enrolled in professional education, but the gender data are not available.

† 1947 data not available.

Table 7
General Category and SC/St Students in
Professional/Special Higher Education

Year	General	SC/ST	Total	Ratio
1957	184,236	15,864	200,100	11.61:1
1996	493,068	56,601	499,669	8.71:1

Table 8
Plan Expenditure on Higher Education and
Technical Education
(Rs.in millions)

Plan- years	Higher Education	Technical Education	Total
I Plan 1951-56	140	200	340
VIII Plan 1992-97	15,610	27,860	43,020 ⁵

The above figures show in absolute terms the giant strides that Indian higher education system has been able to take in the last fifty years. There is, however, no gain-saying the fact that they also contain some lacunae and areas of failure which may not be immediately apparent from the above tables. One paradox, for example, stands out. In spite of this huge expansion of opportunities for higher education in the country, only 6 per cent of its population between 18-24 years (i.e., in the college-going age group), has been able to enter its portals. Another disturbing feature is that although the allotment for higher education in various five-year plans has increased in absolute terms, in terms of the percentage of gross national product, it does not look that impressive. In 1980, the total plan outlay for education was 2.8 per cent of the GNP, while in 1993-94 it went up marginally to 3.8 per cent. Whereas in Morocco, in the same years, the outlays were 6.1 per cent and 5.4 per cent, in Zimbabwe they were 6.6 per cent and 8.3 per cent and in Kenya, 6.8 per cent and 6.8 per cent.⁶ For India, therefore, it is still a far cry from

the popular demand of the allocation of 10 per cent of GNP for education. Of the total allocation on education, the share of higher education has recently shown a downward trend, as the following table will show⁷:

Table 9

Plan	Allocation for Higher Education as Percentage of total allocation on Education	Year
II	18 per cent	1956–61
III	15 per cent	1961–67
IV	25 per cent	1969–74
V	22 per cent	1974–79
VI	22 per cent	1980–85
VII	16 per cent	1985–90
VIII	8 per cent	1992–97

It must be acknowledged that a vast and complex country like India has many problems that are not of her own making. It had inherited many of them—social, political and economic, which are attendant not only to an erstwhile colony but also to a geographically vast, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and highly stratified society. Planning education for a sizeable chunk of world population, half of which is, to make matters worse, bereft of literacy, is always a problem-ridden agendum. India's performance in higher education, therefore, has to be viewed and judged keeping her special problems in mind.

Apart from the quantitative expansion outlined above, India's concern for the qualitative aspect of higher education has been evident in all these decades. The foundation stone of quality in education is the financial security enjoyed by the system. The Central Advisory Board of Education(CABE), a legacy from the colonial administration but reconstituted after independence, has always been alert to various issues that confronted education in general and higher education in particular. It has been instrumental in constituting commissions, committees, study teams, and framing programmes and

policy perspectives to review the status of education and prescribe measures for the redressal of problems and betterment of all aspects of our educational process. The establishment of the University Grants Commission (UGC), formalized by an Act of Parliament in 1956, was an important step in this direction. By this, Indian higher education system was guaranteed financial security, and moved beyond the ad-hoc status of resource generation and disbursement of funds that prevailed earlier. The UGC, which was primarily planned as a funding agency, has over the decades expanded its role and now gives academic directions to the institutions of higher education by recommending guidelines for restructuring syllabi and course-content, suggesting establishment of interdisciplinary 'centres' on various areas of studies and by monitoring the performance of higher education institutions by setting up a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in 1994. It has also started a programme of 'Countrywide Classroom' through satellite which takes lectures by acknowledged experts to students in remote corners of the country.

Besides the UGC which looks after general higher education, many other funding and monitoring agencies are functioning under different ministries of the Central Government. The Indian Council for Agricultural Research(ICAR), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Indian Council for Medical Research(ICMR), the All India Bar Council, the All India Council for Technical Education(AICTE) and the National Council for Teachers' Education(NCTE) are some such organizations. The Central Ministry of Human Resource Development supports bodies like the Indian Council for Historical Research(ICHR), the Indian Council for Social Science Research(ICSSR) and the Indian Council for Philosophical Research(ICPR), as it supports institutions like the Institute of Advanced Studies at Shimla, the Central Institute of Indian Languages at Mysore and the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages at Hyderabad. Many other research and teaching institutes

have been set up for Dairy Research, Population Sciences, Fisheries etc. The institute-based research activity has been a prominent feature of Indian higher education since 1947. The UGC has also encouraged advanced research by setting up centres of interdisciplinary nature of various universities, which function as separate bodies from, but most often collaborate with, the conventional departments. The UGC, in addition, grants special assistance to many progressive conventional departments in the universities, as it supports Advanced Centres of Study at many places. By the sheer quantity of its research activity has recorded a manifold increase after Independence.

A large number of commissions, committees and study teams have been constituted after Independence to review, among other things, the status of higher education in the country and to recommend measures for its betterment.⁸ All these bodies were formed on the directions of the CABE and they often conducted extensive studies on the state of higher education in India from a national perspective. The most elaborate of these exercises has been the report of the Education Commission (the Kothari Commission, 1964–66) which created an excellent model of how such studies should be conducted. These commissions and committees show concern of the national planners and administrators for the quality of education as well as for creating a mass base for it. Behind the formation of these bodies was perhaps the realization that quantitative expansion and proliferation of institutions, often uncontrolled and affected by local pressures (which were often more political than academic) was not always concomitant with qualitative development and growth. In more recent years, expansion of educational opportunities have also been caused by sheer commercial considerations. That is, certain kinds of education have become profitable commodities for sale in the market. Kulandai Swamy (1995: 61) remarks that the unusual growth and expansion of engineering and technological education in the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and

Tamil Nadu⁹ during the preceding decade “have no relevance to any felt manpower need or projected need” of these states and this “development is not based on any state level planning for technical education either.” Many of the private colleges which impart such education often charge high ‘capitation fees’ for entry into them. Recently, however, the Government has attempted to impose some control and restriction on this unscrupulous commercialization of higher education, professional education in particular. On the other side of the picture, the fact that glamorous outfits like the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) have become virtual source of brain-drain has been harshly commented upon by the authors of *Challenge of Education* (p.53).

It is not relevant here to summarize, or even selectively mention, the observations and recommendations of these committees. What instead is crucial are the results of these deliberations and recommendations aimed both at the quantitative spread and qualitative control of this spread.

These attempts at federal planning of education began right after Independence, although education became a concurrent subject (from the state subject which it was earlier) in 1976. They emphasized, first of all, a diversification and ‘depth’ of education including higher education. A resolution, for example, for establishing more central universities was taken in the sixth conference of the State Education Ministers in 1962 (Biswas & Agrawal, 1986 : 214). The IITs were established between 1950 and 1963 for imparting the latest knowledge and skill in engineering and technology, in a somewhat rarefied environment outside the conventional universities.¹⁰ There were committees on general education (1955,1958), committees on specialized education like that of Sanskrit (1956), rural education (1957), fisheries education (1958), and post-graduate engineering education and research (1959). Quite a few review committees were formed for examining the status of teaching commerce, mathematics, biochemistry, botany, English, chemistry, education, philosophy and sociology. Committees on physical

education, art education, and social anthropology were also constituted in due course. Vocational education, suggested as an imperative in the Kothari Commission at the tertiary level, found a committee for itself in 1977. This aspect of higher education has now received a formal status as an undergraduate elective course with hands-on training as a compulsory component.¹¹

The question of equity and access was not forgotten either. Women's education was specially considered by a committee in 1958, although it had found prominent mention in the Radhakrishnan Commission in 1948. Women's education received the maximum attention when equity and access were considered, because women were more or less marginalized in both general and Scheduled Castes and Tribe categories in Indian society. The National Policy of Education (1986) said it most emphatically:

Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The national education system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women.¹²

It also placed 'central' focus on the educational development of the scheduled castes and tribes. Rural education was discussed by committees in 1954, 1957 and 1967; workers' education claimed the attention of a separate committee in 1967. A committee in 1963 considered the proposal for establishing a hill university in north-eastern India, from which was born the North Eastern Hill University at Shillong. Besides such horizontal, geographical expansion, 'vertical' expansion was also planned. The Expert Committees on Correspondence Courses and Evening Colleges of 1961 may have been the distant precursor of what can now be called a thriving network of distance education in the country, the inception of which was marked by the foundation of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in

1985.¹³ It can be added that the most advanced methodology of tele-teaching is now being used in this area.¹⁴ Due attention has also been paid to teachers' education at all levels, in the recommendations of the Kothari Commission in particular. Questions of university administration and discipline have been dealt with in the recommendations of quite a few committees over the years. The universities faced some financial problems in the early nineties, and were often asked to fend for themselves, even in part, which resulted in a furious brainstorming about generating resources. The exercise is going on, and its pitch has become queerer by the circulation of a paper, *Government Subsidies in India*, prepared by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (March 1997), which mentions higher education as a 'non-merit' category for Central subsidy.¹⁵ It hints at a future shrinking of subsidies on higher education. On the other side of the coin, the moral question of the teachers' accountability and social audit of his performance has been debated.

In spite of this impressive number of bodies to ponder over the state of future of higher education, the nagging problem that dogs the administration and planning of Indian higher education is that implementation of the recommendations has been always poor and often half-hearted. Powar (1997) correctly concludes:

We have failed to follow up on the recommendations. The maladies identified by the Kothari Commission over three decades ago still exist.¹³

This failure, no doubt caused by the complex societal and economic reasons mentioned earlier, takes away some of the glitter from the achievements of the nation in the sphere of higher education during the last fifty years, but there is little doubt that the achievements have been praiseworthy on many counts.□

Notes

- 1 'National Education' was defined by Mrs. Anne Besant in the following manner: "it must be controlled by Indians, shaped by Indians, carried on by Indians. It must hold the Indian ideals of devotion, wisdom and morality and must be permeated by the Indian religious spirit. .

India is not to become a lesser—nor even a greater—England, but to evolve into a mightier India. British ideals are good for Britain, but it is Indian ideals that are good for India. We do not want echoes nor monotones, we want a choral melody of nations, mirroring the varied qualities of Nature and God" (Biswas and Agrwal, 1986: 45–46)

- 2 This is what a frustrated Gokhale, peeved by the opposition to his Bill even by his countrymen, said in the Legislative Council speech in 1911, as he knew that his Bill had little possibility of being accepted. (Biswas & Agarwal, 1986: 39)
- 3 This is quite creditable in absolute terms. But in terms of the total population of the country, India has, in one estimate, only 0.1 scientific and technological research worker per 1000 people, while Vietnam has 0.3, Congo 0.3, and Guinea 0.2. (Human Development Report 1997: 181) However, Human Development in South Asia 1997, gives the figures as 0.3 per 1000
- 4 All these tables have been made by abstracting data from the tables provided in Powar, 1997 (Appendix)
- 5 *Human Development Report*, 1997, p 181
- 6 *Agenda*, 72nd Annual Meeting, General Session, Association of Indian Universities, 1997, pp 2–3.
- 7 Its Curriculum Development Centre undertook an extensive exercise in restructuring syllabi in 1990.
- 8 Interested readers may find Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 useful to a large extent in this regard, although the volume needs updating. A source (Patra, 1987) lists about 80 such bodies constituted till 1977 by the Central Government alone, of which more than 50 dealt with higher education in one or more ways. Most important among these commissions/committees are
 - i) University Education Commission, 1948–49, (Chairman: Dr S Radhakrishna).
 - ii) Education Commission, 1964–66, (Chairman: Dr D S Kothari)
 - iii) National Policy on Education, 1968
 - iv) Draft Policy on Higher Education, 1978
 - v) National Commission on Teachers II, 1983
 - vi) Challenge of Education—A Policy Perspective, 1985
 - vii) National Policy on Education, 1986, revised in 1992
 - viii) A Perspective Paper on Education, 1990

- ix) Programme of Action, 1992
- x) CABE Committee Report, 1992
- 9 These four states together provide about 75 per cent of opportunities for engineering and technological education available in the country. (See Chatterjee, 1997 : 39).
- 10 See Gnanam, 1997 (p.3) for the view that the establishment of the IITs and IIMs had hurt the Indian University system in more than one ways.
- 11 See Sudha Rao, K., in Powar and Panda, 1995, pp. 237–47.
- 12 *National Policy on Education-1986* with modifications undertaken in 1992, p.10.
- 13 See Takwale, 1995.
- 14. See the proceedings of the *International Conference on Collaborative Networked Learning* 1999, New Delhi, Indira Gandhi National Open University.
- 15. See *Agenda*, as above, Appendix, 1–18.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

U R Rao

In spite of the long and established tradition in science, dating back to the great ancient astronomers and mathematicians like Aryabhatta, Varahamihira, Sashruta and Bhaskara, India's failure to take advantage of the Industrial Revolution during the three centuries of colonial rule had made it a poor industrially backward nation, totally dependent on foreign sources for all finished goods. The credit for revitalizing the scientific tradition and organizing it into a well-orchestrated and purposeful activity for socio-economic development of the nation truly belongs to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who firmly believed that:

Science alone can solve the problem of hunger and poverty, insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening customs and tradition, of vast resources running to waste of a rich country inhabited by starving people.

Immediately after Independence, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru began translating his dream of modern India into reality through the formulation of a well-orchestrated scientific policy. The first step in our long march towards elimination of hunger was taken in 1948 by initiating a new agricultural revolution. Several specialized national laboratories were set up under the newly formed Council of Scientific and Industrial Research which has now grown into a large network of 45 laboratories and 80 field extension centres, carrying out industrial research in

diverse scientific disciplines. Recognizing the growing importance of nuclear technology, India became one of the first countries to establish a full fledged Department of Atomic Energy in 1948 to carry out advanced research in nuclear sciences. Steps were initiated to develop heavy machine industries, aeronautical establishments, sophisticated tool making facilities, chemical industries and electronic enterprises. The spectacular progress of our space programme which made a modest beginning in 1963 has resulted in making India one of the leading space faring nations of the world.

Rapid technological developments since Independence have no doubt had a significant impact on the socio-economic environment of the nation. The green revolution enabled the country to increase its annual food production from a mere 55 million tons to over 195 million tons transforming India from a food importer to a marginal exporter, despite a three fold increase in population and thus making the spectre of famines witnessed in the 60's a faint memory of the past. Installed electricity generation has gone up from a mere 2300 mega watts to 85000 mega watts. The production of crude oil has gone up from 0.5 million tons to over 32 million tons, coal from 30 to over 240 mt and steel from 1 to 10 mt. These and a ten-fold increase in metal products and industrial goods are typical examples of the industrial growth achieved by India through successive seven five year plans. The gross national product has likewise increased five-fold in real terms, and the annual export has gone up by more than a factor of twenty to reach 33 billion dollars.

While the above figures provide impressive statistical profiles, the explosive growth of population, from 360 million to over 950 million in the last five decades has considerably nullified the benefits of growth, as almost one third of India's population continues to live below the poverty line. The crude birth rate continues to be high at 29 per thousand primarily due to the fact that over 40 per cent of the population and 66 per cent of female

population is illiterate. Explosive population growth with limited land and lack of employment opportunities has inevitably led to large scale migration from rural to urban areas, converting the already socially deficient mega cities into slums. Thus despite the scientific and technological advances made in the last fifty years over a quarter of India's population exists on less than 2200 calories per day with poor sanitation and health care facilities and having no access to safe drinking water.

The negative repercussions of the high technology packaged Green Revolution due to extensive water logging, inadequate drainage and indiscriminate use of fertilizers have resulted in reducing large tracts of once fertile land into saline and alkaline deserts. Large scale deforestation, extensive soil erosion, over-grazing of the precious water resources and gross neglect of water recharge have severely degraded almost 100 million hectares of land out of a total 160 million hectares of arable land in India. Recurrent floods and droughts on an average, cause a loss of 1500 lives and property worth 300 million dollars every year. Rampant environmental pollution, loss of bio-diversity, poor agricultural productivity, inadequate infrastructure and large scale illiteracy have resulted in deterioration of the quality of life to such an extent that our country ranks a low 135 amongst 175 nations of the world.

Even if we assume that that annual production with growth in foodgrains follow the recent trend of 2.7 per cent growth per year, the country will not be able to feed the projected 1.5 billion people by 2040. This requires the foodgrain productivity which is low at 1.7 tons per hectare to substantially increase to at least 4.5 tons per hectare, and is possible only if our scientists initiate a new environment-friendly Green Revolution which can double our foodgrain production in the next four decades. Creation of employment opportunities for the rapidly growing population requires rapid industrialization, improved infrastructure and building technological capability to compete in the integrated global economy.

The year 1991 marks a watershed in the economic history of India, as the country went through a paradigm shift from a highly regulated inward-looking economic policy to a market oriented, export promotion strategy with reduced governmental role as a means to achieve higher economic growth. It is in this context that we need to carefully review the scientific and technological progress achieved by India during the recent past and the steps that need to be taken in the coming decades.

Progress in Science & Technology in India Since the 1950s

Agriculture

India today accounts for 25 per cent of world's pulses production and has become the world's largest producer of sugar at 260 million tons and of cotton at 12 million bales. Due to the significant increase in irrigated crop area from 20 to 60 million hectares, India ranks second in the world in rice production and fourth in wheat production accounting for almost 25 per cent of global rice output and 10 per cent of global wheat production. The oil seed revolution initiated in 1990's has enabled India to quadruple its output to 25 million tons making the country self-sufficient in edible oils. Establishment of industries for food processing, fertilizer and pesticide production has resulted in substantially increasing the per capita availability of foodgrain from 400 grams to over 520 grams. Thanks to the White Revolution initiated by 'Operation Flood', milk production in the country has increased at a compounded rate of 5 per cent per year. Seven per cent annual growth in poultry and doubling of the fish catch have improved the food security of the country, even though the average daily calorie intake of an Indian citizen is only 2400 calories a day, 300 calories less than what is recommended as the minimum requirement by FAO.

Thanks to the spectacular developments in biotechnology, a variety of new genetically engineered seeds, early maturing dwarf varieties of crops, pest resistant

hybrid cultivars and integrated pest management strategies are now available. Pioneering experiments carried out in a number of watersheds covering an area of almost 1 million hectare during the last 5 years have clearly indicated that it is indeed possible to double the yield on a sustainable basis by integrating the vital inputs derived from space remote sensing on soil characteristics, agricultural practices, underground and surface water resources, vegetation cover, environmental status and meteorological information with appropriate biotechnological inputs. The tremendous progress of the site specific Integrated Management of Sustainable Development (IMSD) strategy carried out at each watershed level gives us the hope that, given the political will, our scientists can find the appropriate strategy to provide food and economic and health security to our people.

Energy, Infrastructure and Industrial Research

In spite of the forty-fold increase in energy production since Independence, the per capita availability of power is still a low 0.4 tons coal equivalent as against 11 tons coal equivalent in USA. Difficulty in tapping the hydro-electric potential due to complex terrain combined with limited availability of non-renewable energy resources has inevitably led to the intensification of research in alternate energy sources. The abundance of solar energy throughout the year sparked off research in solar photovoltaic programmes three decades ago resulting in the commercial availability of 100 kw size solar power plants and mini systems for rural applications. Extensive research has led to the development and establishment of over 10,000 bio-gas plants as a part of integrated rural energy programme. Wind energy and small hydro-power projects have been developed and installed in many areas. Considerable amount of research is going on in the exploitation of tidal and wave energies from the ocean. The total contribution from all other sources including atomic energy is less than 3 per cent, with over 97 per

fuel and hydro-electric generation. At least a three-fold increase in energy production is needed to meet the growing demands of rapid industrialization which requires a massive investment of over 300 billion dollars in the next two decades.

Considering that 2.5 per cent growth in GDP is required as demographic investment for every 1 per cent increase in population, India needs to rapidly industrialize to attain an economic growth rate of at least 10 per cent per annum. This calls for an all out effort to eradicate illiteracy and vastly improve our energy, transport and communication infrastructure. Despite the spectacular progress in space communication, our communication infrastructure particularly in rural areas continues to be dismal, with only 1.4 telephones available for 100 persons. Our roadways, railways and air transport continue to be outdated, inefficient, totally inadequate and mismanaged. 60,000 kilometre route of railways and 1.9 million kilometres of roadway, more than half of which is unsurfaced, are hardly adequate to meet the need of almost 1 billion people, spread across 3.2 million square kilometres of area. Economic liberalization policy, removal of Government monopoly, encouragement of private entrepreneurship and establishing a strong organic linkage between our industrial complexes and R&D institutions are essential to enable our industries to compete in the integrated global economy of the post-GATT era.

In spite of the handicaps and earlier over-emphasis on protected import substitution as against market oriented industrial expansion, the chemical industry in general and fertilizer industry in particular have registered an impressive growth over the years, making India one of the major fertilizer producing countries in the world, with an installed capacity of 15 million tons per year. The pharmaceutical industry likewise has expanded to produce bulk drugs of over 500 million dollars value per year enabling the Government to provide health care to the people at affordable prices. A number of research

the people at affordable prices. A number of research establishments have been established to develop pharmaceuticals, new vaccines and drugs, some of them with bilateral or multilateral cooperation, making the country self-sufficient in practically most of the important life saving medicines.

Even though India held a pre-eminent position in metallurgy during the bronze age and had mastered investment casting techniques for making exquisite temple idols, the art and technique of metallurgical process remained stagnant till recently. It is only after 1950, metallurgical development regained importance because of the impetus provided by aeronautical, nuclear and space activities. This has resulted in the development of a variety of aluminium alloys, high strength steel including maraging steel, rubber, Beryllium, Titanium and light weight composites. Equally impressive has been the progress made in heavy chemicals, turbine manufacture, chemicals and petro-chemicals, polymers, adhesives, cement and building materials. Although India is yet to become self-sufficient in the manufacture of high quality integrated chips, with its highly skilled manpower it has carved a niche for itself in software export accounting for almost 30 per cent of the global market. Faced with the threat of embargoes, Indian scientists have succeeded in developing high speed parallel processing Super Computers. By forging an intimate relationship between the scientific establishments and the industrial complexes, India can indeed become an important global player in the industrial world.

Atomic Energy

Recognizing the need 'to develop, control and use atomic energy for peaceful purposes', several research centres were established since 1948 primarily for the generation of nuclear power and nuclear application in agriculture, industry and medicine. Insspite of the secrecy surrounding atomic research and non-availability of information in the public domain, the atomic energy

establishment in India has made impressive progress in several areas related to nuclear physics and its applications. The nuclear research activities today encompass fields like lasers, magnetic-hydrodynamics, agriculture, isotope production and nuclear medicine using several research reactors such as CIRUS, Zerlina, Purnima, Dhruva and the fast breeder reactor at Chennai.

Atomic power production, vital for a oil-poor nation like India, made a modest beginning in 1969, with the commissioning of two 210 MWe reactors using enriched uranium at Tarapur with the help of US nuclear industry. This was followed by the nuclear power reactor in Rajasthan built in cooperation with Canada using heavy water technology and natural uranium. Emphasis on self-reliance in this critical area has led to the development of indigenous technology including heavy water production resulting in the development of six more reactors to produce over 2200 MWe, with another eight additional units of 235 MWe each which are under construction. With the fast breeder reactor at Madras becoming operational in 1984, emphasis has shifted to developing reactors which could use Thorium as fuel, taking advantage of the large reserves of natural Thorium available in India.

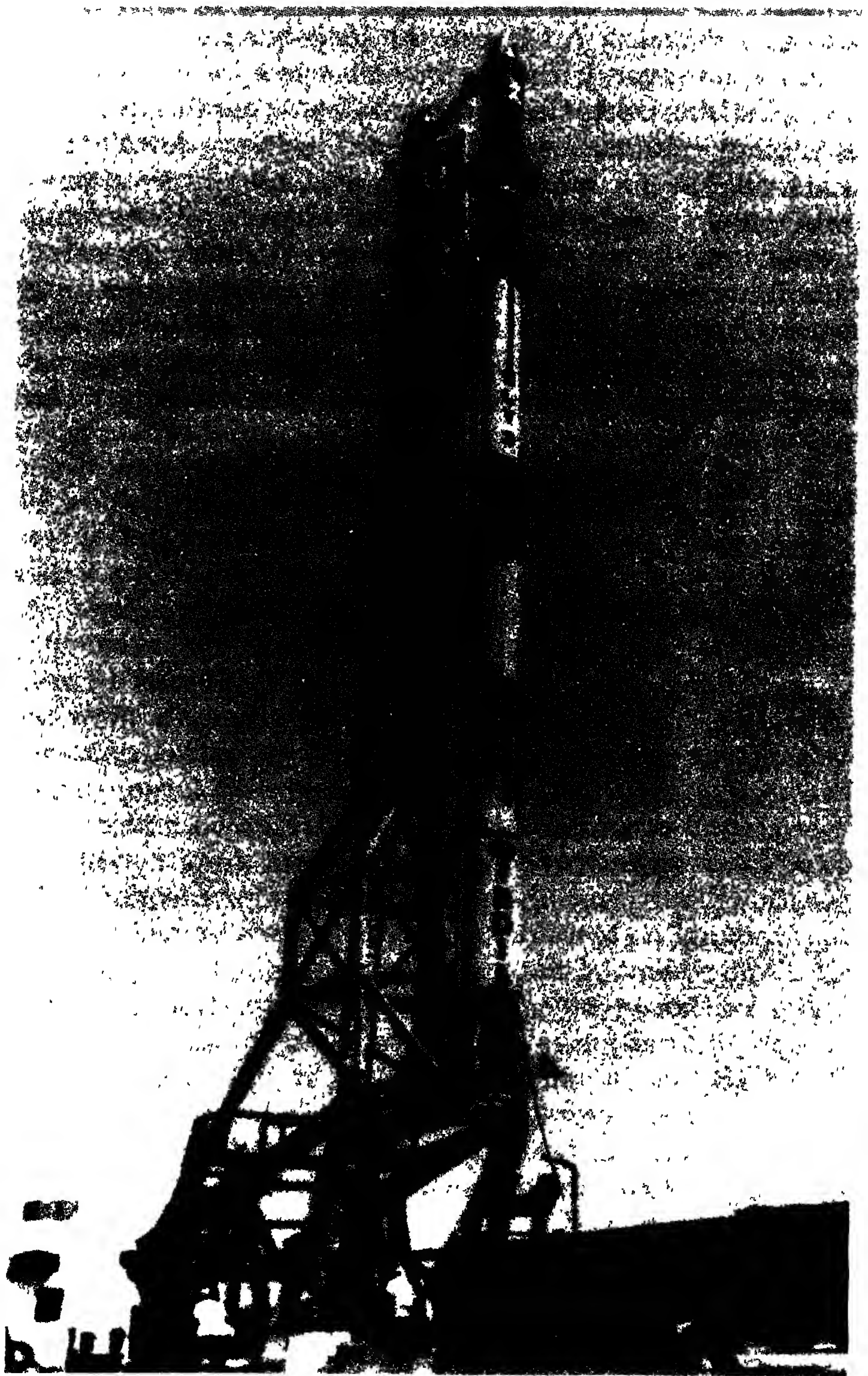
With the successful conduct of the peaceful underground explosion at Pokhran in 1974, India became the first developing country to have mastered fission technology. Undeterred by the restrictions and embargoes imposed by the developed countries, Indian atomic scientists continued their work and after a lapse of 24 years in May 1998, succeeded in carrying out five more nuclear tests including a thermo-nuclear device. With this, India could establish a credible nuclear deterrent to protect its own sovereign status in the face of the already existing nuclear proliferation surrounding it. While India has now become a defacto member of the exclusive nuclear club, it has practically been isolated because it has broken the monopoly of the five nuclear powers, who argue against any nuclear proliferation, yet

consider it as their divine right to hold on to their large nuclear stockpiles. An important consequence of this act by India, however, is the severe embargo applied by many countries like USA, Germany and Japan on all advanced technology items, which could slow down our industrialization effort and also deny international development aid, in spite of India proclaiming moratorium on any further nuclear test and expressing its willingness to sign the CTBT. The only solution to a nuclear free world is for all the nuclear haves to come to an understanding and eliminate the existing nuclear arms in a phased manner, as has consistently been advocated by India.

Space Technology

The spectacular progress in the development of space technology since 1963 and its application to solve the basic problems of India in a totally self-reliant manner is undoubtedly one of the most significant achievements of post-independent India. With a well-focused and application-oriented goal, India's space scientists devoted the first two decades for building a sound infrastructure, developing expertise and carrying out large scale experimental programmes before embarking on nationwide use of space technology for providing regular uninterrupted operational services in the fields of communication, TV broadcasting, meteorological services, disaster monitoring and management of natural resources.

The initiation of communication revolution in 1981 through the unique multipurpose geostationary satellite INSAT-1B was a major landmark in the operationalization of space services in India. Following INSAT-1 series of three satellites, India successfully launched four highly sophisticated indigenously built INSAT-2 series of satellites, each having 50 per cent more capacity than INSAT-1. With over 6000 two-day speech circuits covering 170 routes and an extensive ground network of 280 fixed and transportable earth stations, the nationwide geographic reach of INSAT has been advantageously



The country has taken giant steps in Space technology

used for a variety of applications such as administrative, business and computer communications, Remote Area Business and Message Network (RABMN), facsimile transmission, VSAT networking and emergency communication. One of the most innovative uses of INSAT has been the implementation of the unique, unattended, locale specific Disaster Warning System (DWS) consisting of over 250 receivers deployed in selected, cyclone-prone east coast areas of the country, which has been saving thousands of lives and livestock every year.

The most dramatic impact of INSAT has been the rapid expansion of TV dissemination in the country through the installation of over 900 transmitters providing access to 87 per cent of India's population to national as well as regional services. Use of transportable earth station and Satellite News Gathering vehicles now allow extensive real time coverage of important events anywhere in the country. Two exclusive developmental communication channels are being operated to feed over 500 distant education/training class rooms spread across the country. Recognizing the importance of the interactive communication system, a number of experiments were conducted for imparting developmental education to the target audience of different types both in the rural and urban areas. Encouraged by the success of these, a large scale experiment has now been mounted in the Jhabua District of Madhya Pradesh with 150 receive terminals for promoting development in predominantly tribal areas.

After gaining experience through experimental remote sensing satellites, India launched its first operational, state-of-the-art, remote sensing satellite IRS-1A in 1988 followed by IRS-1B in 1991, both having a resolution of 30 meters in the multi-spectral bands. These have been followed by the highly sophisticated second generation IRS-1C in 1995 and IRS-1D in 1997, each having the capability of imaging at 5.8 meter resolution in the panchromatic and 20 meter resolution in the multi-spectral bands, which are distributed in many countries through a cooperative arrangement with EOSAT of USA

The third generation IRS series with a resolution of 2.5 meters in panchromatic and 10 meters in multi-spectral are now under development for launch in the next three years.

Synoptic, high resolution repetitive imageries gathered from IRS satellites have become a powerful tool for mapping spatial as well as temporal changes in soil characteristics and land use pattern to identify forestry, plantation, pasture land, single and double cropped areas, cultivable wasteland and fallow residual lands. Methodologies have been developed to identify underground water aquifers, map surface water bodies, delineate water logged regions and predict acreage and yield of all major crops using IRS imageries. Regular biweekly bulletins demarcating potential fishing zones in the ocean, based on ocean temperature and phytoplankton distribution, are routinely distributed to our fishermen in the coastal areas to substantially improve their fish catch. Space remote sensing has now become the most important tool for urban planning, environmental monitoring and management of natural resources. IRS remote sensing satellites have become vital for monitoring and management of natural disasters like flood, drought, land slides and earthquakes. Combining space remote sensing inputs with bio-technological inputs, Indian space scientists have unequivocally established their capability to initiate sustainable development strategy at each watershed level for enhancing agricultural productivity, without causing environmental degradation.

Beginning with a modest launcher SLV-3, which launched a 40 kg payload into space in 1981, a systematic effort was mounted to rapidly gain self-reliance in launch vehicle capability. Following the successful operationalization of ASLV, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) was developed, which after three successful experimental flights, launched the operational remote sensing satellite IRS-1D, weighing 1250 kgs in September 1997 into a polar sun-synchronous orbit. With the scheduled launch of Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) with a cryogenic upper stage, capable of launching 2.0 ton class

of INSAT satellite into geostationary transfer orbit, India will become totally self-reliant in rocket technology.

Conclusion

In spite of the significant developments in science and technology, India continues to be a poor developing country having over 16 per cent of world population with less than 2 per cent of the global land area, accounting for less than 3 per cent global energy production and contributing to just 1 per cent of the GDP. As a result of globalization, the large Indian middle class market has become the biggest target of commercial exploitation in the world, which can only be countered by India rapidly industrializing to effectively compete in the integrated global economy. With every advancement in our technological capability, particularly in sensitive high technology areas, developed countries are bound to apply more severe restrictions and embargoes, and deny technology to preserve their commercial monopoly.

Despite the creation of a conducive atmosphere for promotion of international cooperation with the end of the cold war, agreements reached during the Rio summit, general acceptance of the Montreal Protocol for the preservation of the environment and the signing of the GATT agreement, the technological gap between developed and developing nations continues to grow. While GATT has introduced a few concessions to the developing nations for a limited period of time to enable them to compete in the global market place, attempts are made to restrict competition by invoking fair geographical returns policy, application of a quota system and equally dubious arguments based on a level playing field and human rights. In spite of the emerging new perspective of the global village, where the destinies of all the people in the world are interconnected through the common thread of global environment, climate, geosphere and biosphere, the world continues to be divided into the haves and have-nots. Unless the world as a whole is willing to think globally and act locally in

its own interest and security, the dream of building an equitable and truly global village in the next millennium will never be realized.

The problems created by explosive population growth, rampant poverty, large scale illiteracy, lack of adequate employment opportunities and degrading environment can only be tackled by initiating appropriate sustainable development strategies to meet food security requirements, distance education for eradication of illiteracy and rapid industrialization using environment-friendly technologies. Spectacular developments in science and technology have shrunk time and distance, by facilitating instantaneous access to any part of the globe and the third wave information revolution has ushered in the age of information super highway transcending all geographic boundaries. The excellent performance of our scientists and technologists, particularly in areas like nuclear science, agriculture and space have clearly demonstrated that it is indeed well within our capability to provide food, economic and health security to all our people and substantially improve their quality of life, through optimal application of science and technology, given the political will and social consciousness. □

VISION FOR A DEVELOPED INDIA

A P J Abdul Kalam

Independent India was born in 1947 with the label of 'developing country' attached to it. This meant it was not economically strong, it had to depend on other countries for technology. India had no world standing inspite of its size and potential. Therefore, the question we faced then as we do now is how to remove this label of 'developing country' and become a 'developed India'

Before going into economic issues, I shall deal with defence and security issues because these are critical for the political independence which our forefathers got for us after decades of struggle. Independence was the first vision realized by the nation and people. On that bedrock we need to build the second vision of become a developed India with national, economic, food and social security. Human history reveals a co-existence of warfare and human aspirations.

To understand the implications of various types of warfares that may affect us, we need to take a quick look at the evolution of war weaponry and the types of warfare. Recently, I have made a study of different phases of global life and the effect of war through ages. Upto the year 1920, it was mostly direct human warfare. War was essentially the means for establishing or enlarging kingdoms by annexing multiple territories with wealth or for proliferating ideologies. The means used were primitive weapons (swords) and animal platforms. And the toll used by Kings and Emperors was religion. The dominating nations in this period of warfare were Romans, Crusaders and the Arabs. The next phase, that is 1920–1990, the

warfare was weapon driven. The weapons for the warfare were guns, tanks, aircraft, ships, submarines including nuclear weapons deployment, missiles, and reconnaissance spacecraft in the orbit. These weapons and related systems were used mostly by two blocks of nations—the USA and the erstwhile Soviet Union. They were propagating certain ideologies and enlisting a number of nations, giving benefits commercially and militarily to attract them. Proliferation of conventional, nuclear and biological weapons reached a peak because of the competition between these two blocks of super powers.

The next phase has just started from 1990 onwards. The world has graduated into Economic Warfare. The means used is control of market forces through high technology. The participating nations are Japan, Germany, some South Asian countries and few others. The driving force is the wealth generation with certain type of economical doctrine.

During the days of cold war, a predictable state of bipolar world order was getting established with the UN forum providing the necessary platform for maintaining a sense of balance between the nations of the world. The discriminatory or restrictive laws of the western block of developed nations seemed justified on the basis of denial of technology to the enemy. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this east-west axis has taken a north-south orientation and the export controls and technology denial regimes now are directed mainly to the developing nations including India, to maintain the techno-economic superiority of the advanced countries.

Today, we encounter twin problems. On the one hand there is the continuous strengthening of our neighbours through supply of arms and clandestine support to their nuclear and missile programmes, and on the other, all efforts are being made to weaken our indigenous technology growth through control regimes and dumping of low tech systems, accompanied with high commercial pitch in critical areas. I always wonder at the logic of technology control regimes and how the world can silently

witness and accept such a logic. They can develop, stockpile and even proliferate, but we should not develop anything even for our defence. They can have weapons and carriers because they already have and we cannot have because we did not have!

Growth of indigenous technology and self-reliance are the only answer to the problem. Technology not only leads to advanced weapon systems, but also is the main engine for economic build-up and national development. The western industrially developed countries, therefore, set themselves on a path of accelerated techno-economic development. There is no doubt, indigenous technology development is the only key for India to attain more economic strength. The need of the hour is technological excellence and self-reliance.

The urgent issue that we need to address collectively as a nation is how do we handle the tactics of economic and military dominance in this new form coming from the back door. Today technology is the main driver of economic development at the national level. We have to develop indigenous technologies to enhance our competitive edge and to generate national wealth in all segments of economy. The need of the hour is to arm India with technology.

Let us now explore how to arm India with technology not only for the purpose of defence and internal security, but also for food security, energy security, economic and social security of the nation and people. The whole focus has to be to make India a developed country within two decades.

I would like to recall what we had mentioned in a recent book unfolding a Vision for 2020. It is a vision that was born through the minds of several thousands of Indian scientists, technologists, economists, planners, administrators and business persons. I quote from the book:

What makes a country developed? The obvious indicators are the wealth of the nation, the prosperity of its people and its standing in the International forum. There are many indicators

regarding the wealth of a nation; the Gross National Product (GNP), the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the Balance of Payments, foreign exchange reserves, rate of economic growth, per capita income etc. In addition, the volume of trade, the share in international trade (both imports and exports) and rate of growth in both of these also provide measurement of the strength of the economy and its ability to sustain the wealth generated. Economic indicators are important, but they provide only a part of the picture. The numbers, impressive though they may appear, can veil considerable human misery, especially that of the common people. In this context, I and Rajan have often discussed something I observed during my stint at the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad. I came across three persons there, who became in my mind, points of reference that call me back unceasingly to certain issues. Venkat had two sons and a daughter. All were graduates and employed. Living in the same area was Kuppu who had three sons. He succeeded in educating only one. He lived in a rented dwelling. Karuppan had two daughters and one son. He was semi-employed, could not educate any of them because of poverty and had no regular dwelling place. Was it not possible for him to merely give a normal life to his offspring and not an unrealistic or extraordinary one? A reasonable life span, an occupation that would provide them basic comforts and good health care? This is our dream of a developed India.

While reaching this objective we have to keep in mind what the distinguished economist and Nobel laureate Dr. Amartya Sen has said:

The Central issue is to expand the social opportunities open to people. In so far as these

opportunities are compromised by counter-productive regulations and bureaucratic controls, the removal of these hindrances must be seen to be extremely important. But the creation of social opportunities on a broad basis requires much more than the 'freeing' of markets. It calls, in particular, for expansion of educational facilities and health care for all (irrespective of incomes and means), and public provisions for nutritional support and social security. It also demands a general political, economic and social programme for reducing the inequalities that blot out social opportunities from the lives of so many hundreds of millions of Indian citizens.

The young nation after its independence was determined to move ahead with planned policies for Science & Technology. Thanks to several actions, India is very near to self-sufficiency in food, making the near famine conditions of 1950s a forgotten bad dream. Improvements in the health sector have eliminated few contagious diseases. There is an increase in life expectancy. Also small scale industries provide 40 per cent of National GDP—a vast change in 1990s compared to 1950s. Today India can design, develop and launch world class geo-stationary and sun synchronous remote sensing satellites. The nuclear establishments have reached the capability of building nuclear power stations, nuclear medicine and nuclear irradiation of agricultural seeds for growth in agricultural production. India has become a Nuclear Weapon State. Defence Research had led to design, development and production of Main Battle Tanks, missile systems, electronic warfare systems and various armours. India is a missile power. Also we have seen in the ambient conditions the growth in the Information Technology; the country is progressing in hardware and software business of more than a billion dollars. However, after five decades of independence, the nation still suffers from extreme poverty (nearly 40 per cent of its citizens live

below the poverty line) and a deficient education and health infrastructure.

In order to become a developed India the essential needs are (a) India has to be economically and commercially powerful, at least to be one of the four top nations in terms of size of the economy. This means, the GDP growth rate has to be 7 to 9 per cent and the poverty line must come below 10 per cent from the present 40 per cent. (b) near self-reliance in defence needs of weapon, equipment with no umbilical attached to any outside world. (c) India should have a standing in the world affairs.

With this vision of Developed India let us look at what we should all do to reach that status. It is a second major movement for the country after the great independence movement. In this movement everybody has a role. Let me spell out five thrust areas around which we can take several econo-technological action to make the movement a success. (1) Agriculture and food processing (2) Reliable and quality electric power for all parts of the country (3) Education and health care (4) Information Technology (5) Strategic sectors. These five areas are closely inter-related and lead to national security, food security and economic security.

I wish to suggest how each and every Indian, in different walks of life, can contribute towards realizing the vision for the nation. I had discussions with economists, agricultural experts, technologists from different fields, from industry, government administrators at various levels, non-governmental professionals and activists, media persons, and political leaders at different fora. After discussions, I feel concerted efforts in five areas can lead to a major movement towards transformation of the nation. These five areas are marked by strong interlinkages and progress in any one of them will lead to simultaneous action, in other areas as well. The five areas are highlighted below.

Agriculture and food Processing: India should have a mission to achieve a production of a minimum of 360 million tons of foodgrains in two decades. This will

allow for good domestic consumption and still leave a sufficient margin for food exports and aid to other countries. This mission will demand a great revolution in research, technology development, agricultural extension services, and above all a major network of marketing storage and distribution.

Electric Power: This is the most important part of the infrastructure. Besides assuring people of domestic comfort, it is imperative for increasing food production, and to support a whole host of manufacturing operations, in the engineering and chemical and material processing industries, as well as in the smooth operation of the entire transport, communications and information sector, all of which are vital to economic growth and employment. The growth of a nation's GDP is vitally linked to the availability of electric power. India's installed power capacity today is about 85000 MW. Only about 32000 MW reaches the consumer. There is shortage of about 15 per cent in the peak power requirement. The requirement of electric power will only multiply because of the growth in the demand from various sectors. Immediate action is needed to step-up the generation of electricity from coal, gas hydro and nuclear sources. Research on the other non-conventional sources of energy has to be enhanced, for fossil fuels may be exhausted in a few decades as predicted by experts. Increased generation of power must go hand in hand with efficient transmission. The consumer is interested in the actual quality of power that is available, and not in the statistics of the installed capacity of generation. Here the technologies and systems management for countrywide distribution is of crucial importance.

Education and Health: Kuppu and Karuppan, mentioned earlier represent about 60 per cent of India's population. These two have the urge and the willingness to work hard, but because of the lack of education they are unable to utilize the available opportunities for better employment or to improve their standard of living. Lack of educational and employment opportunities perpetuates their poverty. Prof. Indiresan, who led the TIFAC

(Technology Information, Forecasting and assessment Council) panel to identify the driving forces and impedances has tried to point the way out. Indians should be provided access to first-rate education and skill development opportunities. This cannot be done by the prevalent methods of village or other schools and institutes in towns and cities. We need to create clusters of villages with excellent internal connectivity through roads and communications which are also linked to nearby urban centres. These rural clusters would have quality centres of education and health support facilities. People can easily commute between the village and acquire the best skills and education. Their access to well-equipped health care centres will be necessary. These centres would have the knowledge base to advise them on preventive health care methods. The teachers or medical personnel in these quality centres would also have access to other experts in India and even abroad through communication connectivity. Let us not forget India's excellent achievements in satellite communications. Besides technological expertise, what is required is good political and managerial leadership all over the country to implement this mission. Let not the children and grandchildren of Kuppas and Karuppanas be handicapped. We can achieve an India without such handicaps by 2020.

Information Technology: In the Technology vision document, software engineering and associated IT products and services are important core competencies. A decision has already been taken at the national level to make India an information technology superpower in about a decade. The Information Technology should take into account two important items. All of us feel that India has the intellectual power for higher levels of software. High level software provides a challenge to our best minds and at the same time it is a wealth generator. This should be focused upon as a mission area in Information Technology. If the necessary enabling conditions are provided, this single area can transform our Information technology, electronics and manufacturing sector into a major economic entity.

Another item relates to actions for the spread of Information Technology applications countrywide for purposes ranging from boosting business to spreading knowledge about fundamental rights and responsibilities, impart skills, to provide preventive health care information and for several such items pertaining to acquiring a better standard of living. It can be a very useful tool for transmission of education to even the remotest parts of our country. India's system of education and skill-generation can be transformed in a decade if we can creatively and purposefully deploy Information technologies.

Strategic Sectors: To reach the status of a developed India, in addition to the four mega-missions mentioned before, there is an equally important mission for national security. In today's environment, national security is derived from the technological strength of the nation; that alone will give us the real strength. It is India's experience, be it in agriculture or in the areas of the nuclear, space and defence research, that when visionaries set a mission, results are achieved. This strength is to be further expanded with the creation of a few major industries in aerospace advanced electronics, advanced sensors and advanced materials. These industries should operate in a market-driven environment winning global markets. For example, India should be in the business of building small passenger jets even with an international consortium. Likewise, we should be in the business of selling satellites and providing commercial launch services. Marketing of aerospace systems, providing aircraft sub-systems, maintenance services to global customers, as well as business in products with advanced sensors and advanced materials, should become a part of our normal business. We should also begin aggressive marketing of various defence systems such as main battle tanks, guns, LCA type aircraft, certain types of missiles and nuclear power stations. The trust towards self-reliance should be coupled with global marketing, as the developed world force upon us. Such an approach should become the focus in the strategic sector. In this direction, the Ministry of Defence

has a self-reliance mission of realising 70 per cent indigenous defence systems by 2005, from the present 30 per cent. To achieve this target, the defence R&D and production infrastructure are already geared up and the partnership of Indian corporate sector has been sought to accomplish this major task. Similarly, other departments have technologies pertaining to strategic industries have to open up to help set up major industries which were the multiple needs of domestic and global markets.

Implementation: My suggestions for these major five missions, do not envisage the present methods of departmental implementation or expanding the governmental structures. To ensure that India marches towards the cherished goal of a developed nation, there is an urgent need to change the present methods of working and the mind set that has developed because of centralized managerial system. Many existing governmental structures would need to be drastically reduced. There should be reduction of monopolies and a great competition in the implementation of many packages of these mega-missions. Therefore, private sector participation would be required along with more liberal and simplified procedures. Healthy competition leads to greater efficiency and innovation. Empowerment of implementing teams would lead to speed in action and enhance capability to take risks. Wherever there is a government presence, its mode of operation should be made a facilitating one and the public accountability systems should be changed accordingly.

I believe, that the five mega-missions when integrated and implemented with a national focus, will result in action which will shape the second vision of the nation. The necessary financial, managerial and human resources would flow from those whose minds are ignited, including those in the government and industrial sectors.

The vision for a developed India is even though driven fully by economic development coupled with security needs of the nation, it is important to note that the intellectuals of the nation is equally important. What it means is: India, due to its ancient civilization, inspite of

over-powering from various invading nations, the intellectual wisdom needs to be sprung back, matched with Indian value system. The intellectuals' mighty minds built in self-confidence with compassion for the service to poorer section are the most important demand for a developed nation—happy society.

When I think of India as a developed nation, I can see doubts all around with our problems in science & technology, healthcare, infrastructure etc. This makes me recall my experience after one of my talks at Hyderabad. A ten-year-old girl came up to me for my autograph. I asked her, 'Young lady, What is your ambition?' 'Uncle, I want to live in a developed India', she replied without hesitation. Also, I would like to quote Sir C V Raman, at the age of 82, while addressing young graduates:

I would like to tell the young men and women before me not to lose hope and courage. Success can only come to you by courageous devotion to the task lying in front of you. I can assert without fear of contradiction that the quality of the Indian mind is equal to the quality of any Teutonic, Nordic or Anglo-Saxon mind. What we lack is perhaps courage, what we lack is perhaps driving force which takes one anywhere. We have, I think, developed an inferiority complex. I think what is needed in India today is the destruction of that defeatist spirit. We need a spirit of victory, a spirit that will carry us to our rightful place under the sun, a spirit which will recognise that we, as inheritors of a proud civilization, are entitled to a rightful place on this planet. If that indomitable spirit were to arise, nothing can hold us from achieving our rightful destiny. □



STATUS OF WOMEN

V Mohini Giri

For an Indian, no topic is as important now as that of the completion of fifty years of our Independence. It is a paradox, yet true, that notwithstanding the fact that India has a large number of illiterates and poor, the country has performed well in many spheres during the past half century. In nation building, women's participation can best be understood in two related ways. First, through the various provisions in the Constitution, laws and policies. Second, and more important, is the role women have defined for themselves through the various sectors of women movement—may it be political empowerment, the *Sathins*, the *Sanjivinis* or the *Praganam*, the link workers of Andhra, the *Samakhya*, campaigns against liquor, dowry, child marriage, etc. The Human Development Reports of UNDP, present a gloomy picture on the status of women. The Reports have established that there is not a single country where women enjoy equality with men.

The Meaning of Status

'Status' is an omnigenous relative term describing the position at a given time. How does one judge the status of woman? Is it her participation in all spheres of human activity? Is it only her economic independence? Is it empowerment, political and social or is it the change in her role from agriculture to industry, commerce or corporate world? During the three years at the National Commission for Women and my frequent meetings with

a cross-section of women from widely different fields like sericulture, agriculture, fishery, construction work, *bèedi* industry, farm labour, *anganwadi* workers, *Sathins* of Rajasthan, *Sanjivinis* of Haryana, women in prostitution, women in custody, women in mental asylums, tribal and scheduled caste and minority women and last but not the least, the urban middle class and the urban slums gave me a great insight into the changing role of women. I used to ask each group, “are you different from your mother?”, and the prompt reply was always, “yes, I am totally different from my mother”. I found the difference because women now are aware of themselves and have broken the curse of silence. They are now articulate, aware and awake, but does that mean that the status of women in society has changed?

Have we fulfilled the resolve enjoined in the Constitution to give equality to women? Have we kept the promise of free and compulsory education to all children? Statistics reveal that more than half of our women population are illiterate, underfed, under-nourished and exploited, but they survive!

The status that a woman enjoys in a society is the real and the true mirror of her status. India—a patriarchal society with strong inbuilt gender bias and prejudices, where man invariably feels superior to women can hardly be the best foundation for according a dignified status to women. In sacred books and scriptures she is *Durga* and *devi*, but in actual practice she is a mere *dasi* born to give comfort to man! Despite the fact that women workers contribute more than half of a family’s income, they are universally and routinely met with discrimination.

Constitutional Provisions

Our Constitution confers equality before law, universal adult franchise and equal opportunities for men and women. Many constitutional, legal and administrative measures have been taken which aim at improving the working and living conditions of women and enable them to actively participate in the shaping of the nation. These

measures include the Constitutional mandate for gender equality and justice, enactment of new laws and amendments of existing laws to protect and promote the interests of women, setting up of women specific administrative and economic structures like a separate women and child development departments at the Union and state Government levels. Other measures include the constitution of the National Commission for Women, Commissions for Women in several states, orientation in plan strategy to include women specific and women related programmes and launching of special schemes like *the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh*, and *the Indira Mahila Yojana*.

Education

At the time of Independence, India's education system was not only small but was also characterized by inter and inter-regional, as well as structural imbalances. Several provisions in the Constitution sought to ensure that education would reach the masses. The National Policy of Education (NPE) of 1986, updated in 1992, is a land mark in Indian education. It is a dual track approach designed to promote simultaneously adult literacy and primary education with a focus on girls and other disadvantaged groups. It postulates integration of gender perspectives in all aspects of planning. There is a pronounced policy shift from an equalization of educational opportunity to education for women's equality. It enjoins that the education system should play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women, foster the development of new values through revised curricula and text books, provide systematic training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators—all through the active involvement of educational institutions. The move to make education compulsory through a constitutional amendment is a welcome step. Special schemes for promoting girls education are noteworthy.

Female literacy rates have shown a substantial increase. During the decade 1981 to 1991, female literacy increased at a faster rate than male literacy. In 1951, the literacy rate of females was 8.8 per cent and it rose in 1991 to 39.29 per cent. India has a massive system of higher education. At the post-graduate level, the enrolment of women was 35.1 per cent of the total enrolment. Their enrolment figures was highest in Kerala (53.4 per cent) and lowest in Bihar (16.9 per cent).

The participation of women in technical and professional streams has shown marked increase from a little over 6000 in 1950–51 to 1.46 lakhs in 1986–87, an increase of 23 times. There has been a noticeable growth in the number of women students in the engineering and technology streams in Indian Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics. As against 40 women students in 1950–51 (0.3 per cent), the number rose to 16.67 thousand in 1986–87 (7.7 per cent) and 78.3 thousand in 1993–94 (13.1 per cent). The same trend extends to other professional courses such as law, medicine and management. There are a large number of exclusive women's colleges and universities which seek to play a distinct gender sensitive role, which is important in a largely traditional society like India.

Women in Decision-making and Empowerment

Participation of women is an integral part of the democratic process and strengthening the quality of civic life. Governmental and non-governmental interventions have facilitated and promoted women's participation in decision making. Women have participated in the political process—as voters, as candidates contesting elections and in deliberations in Assemblies and Parliament. They have held public office at different levels.

Following the reservation of 33.3 per cent of seats for women through the 73rd and 74th Amendment, about one million women have entered local self-government institutions. The effect of women *panchayats* on the larger society and the enormous constructive forces they will unleash are difficult to articulate, but the result

would be most beneficial. Seeing women in positions of power and successfully fulfilling their functions will lead to positive development and realization of potential among the younger generation of boys and girls. Tradition-bound ideas of woman and her functions will also see a gradual change. This will make it easier for the coming generations to fit into challenging roles and be ideal citizens. This process of empowering women is being taken to the zenith through the 84th Constitution Amendment Bill providing for one third reservation of seats for women in *the Lok Sabha* and state legislatures. It is high time that the Government and various opposition political parties take a determined stand and ensure that the bill is passed without any dilution or further delay. Hypothetical fears and apprehensions about women entering politics are unfounded. Some state governments have also provided reservation for women upto 30 per cent in public services.

The representation of women in public services has been increasing over the years though the number is still very small. In 1996, there were 501 women in the Indian Administrative Service, 66 in Foreign Service and 64 in the Police Service. The women employees in the Central Government constituted 7.58 per cent of the total employees. The number of women in State Public Services is still less, except in some cases e.g., among teachers and nurses. The adoption of a provision of 30 per cent reservation for women in public services by all states as well as the Central Government as Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, would go a long way in improving women's representation in decision-making bodies.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women should be viewed against the social mechanism by which they are forced into subordinate position. It is a manifestation of unequal power relation, which has led to men's domination over women and discrimination against women. While the basic reason for violence against women is their inferior

status in a male dominated society—educationally, economically, politically and socially, there are other factors responsible too. The increasing criminalization of society, media images of violence, inadequate means to address the causes and consequences of violence, poor enforcement of legal provisions, unabashed consumerism and erosion of traditional values have all added to the problem. In India, the problem is sought to be tackled through legislative intervention and through awareness and sensitization campaigns on gender issues but the results are still not satisfactory.

Women's Movement and NGO's

The genesis of the National Commission for Women is linked to the women's movement in India— spearheaded by voluntary agencies and activists—which gathered momentum after the setting up of the Committee on Status of Women in India. The key role of the voluntary sector in catalyzing women's advancement has been recognized universally. In fact, it has been the fore-runner of all governmental effort for women's development in India.

The growth and development of voluntary effort in our country has passed through several phases over the last four decades. In the earlier stages, the voluntary organizations fought for social reforms focussed on women's emancipation and their efforts were directed towards providing institutional services for women in need of care and protection. In the mid '70s, voluntary effort was geared to raising the consciousness of women on their status and rights, so that they become the active agents of their own development. The Government involved representatives of voluntary organizations working in the field of women's welfare and development in the various bodies constituted for formulating policies and programmes for women.

NGOs in India have established linkages with the international women's movement. NGOs have the flexibility to cross national barriers and promote

transnational solidarity of women. Today, India has a strong, vibrant and committed women's movement to take up the causes of women on gender discrimination, denial of rights to women, combating atrocities on women and for gender equality and gender justice.

Conclusion

It is my view that to bring about an improved status for women through economic development and gender equality four factors are needed: (1) A government with a vision; (2) an active and vibrant women's movement; (3) conducive legal and economic framework; and (4) partnership ventures. Underdevelopment anywhere is a drag on development everywhere. The world is getting closer and countries are increasingly interdependent. Advances in scientific fields especially, space research and communication, have very much reduced the distance between countries facilitating easy and greater flow of knowledge for the benefit of human kind. I am not at present going into the wasteful expenditure on building armaments, especially nuclear arsenal to the detriment of human development. The use of scientific knowledge to improve working and living conditions of people is the need of the hour.

It has been established that there exists a direct relationship with poverty, low levels of living and development through partnership. As women constitute an overwhelming majority of the world's poor, their advancement has to be regarded as the cornerstone of sustainable development. Indeed, enhance the status of women and we have already initiated the process of economic improvement.

It is my belief that the status of women would not materially alter till such time the mindset of men is radically changed and for this the starting point should be right at the family level, then the school and so on.

The Indian woman has still a long way to go. However, a beginning has been made and the change in women's status in the decades since Independence has been

dramatic. The right of the married woman to work outside the home does not raise any eyebrows, the second income in a family is welcome. The Indian woman exercises more authority within her home and with her income. She even dares to end an unhappy marriage.

The gender disparity that vitiates the development process in our country presently has its origin at the most vulnerable point in a women's life—the girl child growing up in a family. Education of the girl child is the best remedy to correct the imbalance and no cost is too high to achieve it. The status of women will then continue to improve on a sustained basis.

Individual women and groups of women have in their own small ways shaped the nation. It is the small drops of water that make the ocean. India now marches into the 21st century to achieve gender equality and justice through partnership of men and women. Empowerment of women is a sine qua non for bringing about a harmonious, sustainable and egalitarian society. Our nation is on the march. □

THE MASS MEDIA

N Bhaskara Rao

As India enters the new millennium, the country presents a picture of contradictions, imbalances, inequalities even in the case of mass communication despite significant strides the world has made in communication technologies and when the new media, like the Internet, are making global village concept a reality. Nevertheless, the nineties will go down as years of communication revolution in India. During this decade the scene has witnessed qualitative and quantitative changes as never before. In fact, never before the mass communication scenario in India was so rosy and complex as it is now. It could be further said that never before the mass media, more specifically the electronic media, have dominated the process of mass communication of the country as they are today. Perhaps no other policy or 'programme' of the government in recent times has achieved so much equity among people of the country as mass media did.

Relevant Societal Scene

Obviously the prevailing 'societal scene' at any given point reflects and sets the scope of mass communication environment. Some pertinent features of this societal context include:

1. Life style phenomena—India today is witnessing certain transition in the life styles of its people in terms of consumption priorities and spending and time use patterns, to an extent orchestrated by the mass

media and as a consequence of market-lead phenomena of globalization. So also in the case of basic value systems.

2. Literacy and mobility levels—well over half of India's rural adult population continue to be illiterate although the overall national levels are changing faster. The recent mass literacy movement taken up on a large scale is bound to speed up the process further. Notwithstanding the literacy barrier, there has been increased mobility of people from place of birth apart from rural-urban migration.
3. Regional imbalances in the development process continue to be glaring; so also the levels of exposure to mass media. Over a quarter of population continue to be 'below the poverty line'. And remain outside the reach of all mass media put together. In fact, in some states/regions of the country, it is half of the population.
4. The current phenomena of policy reversal (by 180 degrees!) the country is witnessing, following the wave of 'economic liberalization' is yet another dimension with implications to the mass communication environment as well as to the very structures and pre-occupations of mass media in the country.
5. Attitudinally, however, the citizen of the country is going through certain critical appraisal in things around amounting to a crisis in confidence in traditional public forums and institutions and into the future—a view that imply "past was better", "but not sure of the future". Mass communication network sets the frame of mind of citizens and a perspective for an optimistic future. This phenomena also implies an increased reliance on mass media.

Policy Imperatives

An undercurrent that is steering the direction of public systems, mass media being one of them, is the process of liberalization and deregulation. This has already set the tone for an unprecedented expansion in the infrastructure, its restructuring and reallocation and

reordering the priorities of the mass media. The motivating force behind for these process is neither the people within nor the lessons from the past experiences and experiments so much. Also, the process of change or shift has not been a gradual one, particularly in the case of television.

A Communication Revolution?

Mass Communication environment received a philip with the recent expansion in the telecommunication network in the country, particularly the STD and public call telephones. Today one could telephone some 10,000 locations directly within the country cutting across the state and regional boundaries and some 250 countries across the continents as easily from a Public Call Centre. This has enhanced access to specific information, irrespective of whether one is privileged or not and his/her academic and economic accomplishments. This has further led to data 'networks' and enabled many more 'nodal points' of communication to emerge with expansion in the rural phones more recently.

The telecommunication based data/information networks are becoming now 'open networks' with access to any public, although at present only from urban centres. This service is bound to expand parallel to telephone links all over the country and bring even more visible change in the character of mass communication scene. This process is receiving boost with the spread of E-mail, cellular and paging technologies in the country, 'Fax' which was not even heard a couple of years ago in India today has penetrated nook and corner and there is so much competition in making this service available from neighbourhood small sundry shops. This activity will receive further boost once FM radio transmitters are put to use for networks. 1999 will see a similar proliferation of E-mail and Internet in the country. As a result of all this, broadcasting is becoming more and more a telecommunication service and telecom is becoming a communication service in an all encompassing way.

Convergence of technologies to do with broadcasting, telecommunication, cable, satellites will open new opportunities as well as challenges.

Certain contradictory developments recently are interesting to take note. While on the one hand there is increased urge for 'information' and the 'unmet' information needs are mounting, the mass media, more specifically the newer ones, are becoming more of entertainment outlets and are also being viewed as marketing media rather than mass media. How else one would explain the most recent findings of the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) that there has been no increase in the viewership to the "news and current affairs". The under-current is not merely the question of 'credibility' of government media. This is despite increased media options and proliferation of channels and news bulletins

The Media Scene

The media scene in India in terms of reach of mass media is nowhere near what it is in China today. That perhaps also explains the growth models and development stages of the two countries. Although around 75 million copies of all newspapers are in circulation, the readership is only around one-third of adult population of the country. Little over 50 million households have TV set and easily one-third of them have also got cable connection. The number of telephone connections today is not more than 15 million. With the number of personal computers reaching nearly 2 million, multimedia scene in India received a philip in 1998. The next break through in India's communication scene is expected with the convergence of communication technologies starting with urban households from 2001.

On the face of it television viewership in India appears higher than exposure to other mass media, both rural and urban. This cannot be as yet. It is unfair to compare these figures of TV with press and also of radio and cinema. Each media has its own unique characteristics. Radio continues to be relied on more in rural India. While

readership of newspapers is daily, viewership of TV or cinema is not daily. Nevertheless, the table below gives an idea of how limited the reach of mass media is in India. Then, of course, if the duplication between the media is considered, the total reach of all mass media would be less than two-thirds of the population. With the proliferation of media same people are having more and those outside continue to remain outside the reach.

Reach of Mass Media (1998)
(Percentage of Adult population 14+ years)

Mass Media	All India	Urban	Rural
T.V. Viewers	45	76	33
Press Readership	34	58	24
Radio Listenership	20	21	19
Cinema going	19	30	15

This brings us to the contradictions of mass media scene in the country. This critical recent development includes:

1. Proliferation. There has been a spurt in all media except perhaps in the case of feature films on the theatre circuit. However feature films and the type continue to sweep TV channels. There is of course sporadic cycles of spark of Indian cinema sweeping the market.
2. The distinction between the government controlled electronic media and the privately run media is blurred today. With recent liberalization drive, competitive pressures and commercial compulsions have become the driving force of all media enterprises.
3. The motivating force for the media proliferation as well as for their content thrust is advertising support rather than the so called 'Fourth-Estate concerns' with which newspapers were associated hitherto.
4. It is not user-end compulsions rather the technological options that is dictating the current expansion in the mass media. This has further led to certain vacuum and imbalance between software needs and what the new electronic media calls out. Recent boom in television channels and viewership has not affected the

newspapers in terms of their circulation. Their ad revenues however have come down marginally.

5. In less than a decade Cable TV in India has taken extensive roots across the country and made all the difference to the media scene. In fact, cable TV is better decentralized and localized media, although in terms of contents only at few places the difference is visible. Cable TV has also brought to fore a hoast of small entrepreneurs. The number of operators today is put any where betwen 45,000 to 55,000, covering arund 18 million households, that is almost one third of all TV households in the country.
6. Despite proliferation and expansion of newer technologies, almost one-third of the country's adult population in 1998–99 is outside the 'reach' of conventional mass media put together and the imbalances in the extent of reach across regions and socio-economic sections of people continue to be glaring; they have narrowed only marginally. Neither of the mass media, including the television, have a reach, with some regularity or other, among half of the rural households. In fact, in the case of news/information programmes, the reach is not more than one-third of the total population. Proliferation is not adding to the reach or even to the choice. The same people are watching more and more and also reading more newspapers.

New environment

Mass Communication environment today is engulfed by certain dilemma which are not merely transitory or cyclical in character.

1. Competitive media and captive audience is perhaps how the current mass communication environment could be described where the media are competing for 'reach', the process of formula being relied by them is the same, the result being certain 'helpless' people out there in a passive mode as if the media have not provoked them or even equipped them to discern options/choices.

2. The eternal issue as to what is 'public interest' and 'what interests the public' is brooding with 'rating' mania gaining ground recently as a determining factor and guiding spirit for the priorities of mass media. Public-interest-obligation is interpreted largely as being providing entertainment.
3. Enlightenment or entertainment dichotomy continues in software despite change in media mix and newer technologies. With penetration of satellite TV and cable networks across the country, entertainment galore has become the mission and the messiah (means and end) of the media. Education and information has become a peripheral concern. Skill upgradation or active citizenry are not the priorities. Bringing the two streams together for an entertainment-education format and production formula at best is an isolated affair.
4. The electronic media more specifically have become a catalyst of 'consumerism' in the country. The extent of creativity that has gone into advertising in this media is perhaps far more than in the education stream. No wonder then that majority of school-going urban children watch TV 2 or 3 hours a day and 90 per cent of them like the ads but hardly watch programmes meant for children.
5. Despite television and radio continue to be relied on for news in rural India by much larger sections of people, Press continue to set the agenda for the country but TV channels are forging ahead to share this distinction. TV channels have not become as 'holistic' as All India Radio or even as the newspapers are. But more recent initiatives in this regard by some channels may open up new opportunities.
6. Television has become the preoccupation of not merely the advertisers but also of the government and politicians. What else explains the recent neglect of radio medium in the country. The 'supplementary' potential of mass media for educational and skill upgrading has not been explored with any seriousness and concerted effort.

7. Equally important is the neglect of inter-personal forums which enhance the power of mass media in terms of scope and relevance.
8. The recent initiative of electronic media, particularly the satellite TV to regionalize their programmes in terms of languages and coverage has already opened up new vistas.
9. The mass communication environment continues to be deprived of two qualitative inputs—inappropriate and insufficient training arrangements and dearth of research back up essential for any dynamic communication endeavour. Appraisal and analysis of media performance in general and in various contexts is yet another missing link. As in the Western countries most of what is being done in the name of research is primarily in support of advertising.

Certain Dilemma

The formula that mass media are a double edged weapon is too evident to realise, even more so with today's electronic media. Nevertheless, it could be said, on the basis of the trends available from 'content analysis' and from disjointed field studies that certain 'negative edge' by and large is sharper and more active. The satellite TV recently has given more visibility to negative potential as part of total public communication system

When not entertaining or promoting consumerism, mass media become out lets of government or party politics. Individual initiatives and efforts, including those by non-governmental forums, hardly get their due share in the mass media. According to a study by this author a couple of years ago such coverage hardly account for five per cent of news space time in the media. It was also found from this analysis that 50–60 journalists, majority of them not far away from the Parliament House, in New Delhi, provide the cues for the mass communication process of the country. Mass media including the electronic ones, spend much less than 10 per cent of their revenues on primary news generation (against hardly 3

per cent two decades ago when TV was not around). Also, today it is the managers of advertising and circulation/marketing functions rather than journalists, who set the policies and priorities of their respective media outlets.

One would expect theoretically that with 'proliferation' of mass media, democratic practices get strengthened. But, neither public debate on issues of consequence could be said to have gone up nor its quality in terms of long term concerns. So also the value of vote. For, the percentage of votes polled has been unrelated to public campaigns. No wonder then that election-time-manifesto-related political programmes on radio and TV hardly acquired any listenership or viewership. Infact this has not crossed 5 per cent.

Also, with proliferation of TV channels and newspapers one would expect to have 'a choice' in the kind of software available. But with all of them falling in the same category and filling up with the same footage there is hardly any such option in reality. And yet there is no reiteration or motivation for a public service broadcasting in the country.

Media Policies

There is certain mix up in the country as to the distinction between media policy, broadcast policy and Prasar Bharati. Nevertheless, various developments on the media front are despite uncertainty about the Government and confusions in the Government. The abrupt and haphazard media explosion could be attributed to this contradiction and hesitation in the Government policies. It was against this background that the landmark judgement of the Supreme Court of February 1995 rejuvenated the hopes. In fact, this judgement together with the developments on the technology front, has shifted the debate in the country from freedom and monopoly to autonomy and accountability and of late to issues to do with regulations and impact of television. Although liberalization should not mean shifting from the monopoly of the state to the monopoly of the markets, it is compete or perish which

is dictating the character of television in India. More in a reactive rather than a pro-active mode.

Three recent initiatives of the Government in this context need to be referred to. The first is that of reviving the Prasar Bharati Act which remained in comatose despite unanimous passage by Parliament almost a decade earlier until revival overnight at the end of 1998 by an Ordinance. The second is the Cable TV Networks Regulation Act 1994 recognising cable TV as a formal media. The third was the Broadcast Bill awaiting passage in Parliament for two years now. The Bill proposes to regulate broadcasting in the country, under a Broadcasting Authority.

Perhaps nowhere in the world has the government of a country given up control over its powerful electronic media as has happened in India in 1997. All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD), which were under the control of Government since their inception, now operate under an independent Prasar Bharati Corporation. The abrupt dissolution of Parliament in December 1997, within a month after the coming into being of Prasar Bharati Board, has been the first challenge for Prasar Bharati. Elections are always a testing time for any media; more so for the ones just released from the clutches of 'government control' and which have earned the reputation of being 'manipulated' by the party in power. But then politicization and personalization of posts of functionaries of Prasar Bharati has created new uncertainties causing a set back to corporatization of AIR and Doordarshan. The political uncertainty of last couple of months has further added to the bickerings in bringing in a regulatory regime for broadcasting in India.

Some Future Trends

For some years now Indian Press has been viewed at par with those of other developed economies. With some kind of formalization of Satellite TV and cable TV operations, India could also be said to have joined the comity of 'global media' with all its ramifications. Overall,

on mass media front, India could be said to have missed an opportunity to be visible outside its borders. The initiatives in this regard are yet to catch on.

Book reading habit has already declined among younger generations in the recent years and it is likely to decline further in favour of audio and visual mass media. The relevance of public libraries and reading rooms has been on decline for some time. Most government publications are languishing in godowns both because of outdated approach and decline in readership to such printed material. And yet however in the case of newspapers there has been an overall increase in the growth levels of circulation of larger publications. And despite certain decline in the advertising support available. According to a survey by the Centre for Media Studies, there is a ten per cent decline in last 5–6 years in the ad support to daily newspapers, most of it diverted to visual electronic media. Whatever growth has been there recently it is mostly in the case of bigger newspapers and this will continue to be the case in the coming years.

The formal education system in the country has been operating more or less in isolation of the mass media. There is no effort to have 'appreciation' curricula, thereby the young ones are better equipped in dealing with the country's mass media and also able to built in minimum restraint voluntarily. The mass media's effort, in turn, to tie up or supplement those of the school system also have not let much mark so far, including those by Doordarshan in collaboration with UGC, etc. Despite recent advances in satellite technology within the country, distance education broadcasting is still a distant reality as of now. □

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INDIAN LITERATURE SINCE INDEPENDENCE

Indra Nath Choudhuri

In the thirties, before India won Independence and established itself as a sovereign democratic republic, emphasis began to shift in Indian literature from romantic individualism to social relations. The romanticisation of the past and personification of nature and urge for *Advaita* (oneness) began to give way to a more realistic and critical approach to existing social institutions. The traditional idealistic view of life gradually yielded to a greater concern for the socio-economic conditions of the people. If earlier, in view of the movements for social reform by the Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and others, the writer was concerned with the moral degradation of the society, now one found him disturbed by the poverty of the people and national oppression. Prem Chand, whose earlier stories had romanticised freedom, now took hold of the ordinary peasant—exploited in the extreme—as the central character of his writings. On the one side, the impact of Mahatma Gandhi turned writers in different Indian languages towards the depiction of the life of the common man, the poor and the illiterate, particularly the villagers and the aim of Gandhian humanism of class-caste harmony on the other side, another orientation, caused by the introduction of Marxist ideology attracted writers to give a new definition of their role in society on the side of the struggling humanity and write about the Marxian egalitarianism of a classless society. However, a tension

was quite visible among writers in the 30s and 40s about accepting either the Gandhian or the Marxist model.

The shifting of emphasis from romantic idealism to social realism was possible because of the impact of western values and education and the inner urge of the literary community to make way for modernization but then it led the social group to a position which was anti-tradition, creating a major tension in literary expression. This tension was very much apparent in the movement for identifying India's modernity, particularly when modernity came to be recognized as synonymous with westernization. Capacity for change for many was equated with capacity for reproducing the western pattern, and for others, the challenge of traditionalism could be met only by showing our capacity for innovation. This dilemma forms the basis of the various themes of Indian literature. It sometimes pushes a writer to raise the voice of protest, or else it leads him to show his capacity for innovation to give a new dimension to tradition. Or else, the writer seeks internationalism in literature which was a kind of escape from Indian reality. Our contact with western knowledge and thought in the 19th century created a false consciousness in us that servility to the west was modernity. As a result, the culture of the western educated middle class sought its roots in the west and made a clear break from the traditional indigenous culture, thus extending the urban-rural dichotomy to the cultural field. This kind of false consciousness created two different views of Indian reality. One, the glory of India is in its past—in transcendentalism, timelessness and spiritualism. This indological approach to Indian reality eulogising only the past and creating a dichotomy between the past and the present as well as between the urban (western) and the rural (traditional) created a schism in the continuity of the Indian literary tradition.

The second view of perceiving the Indian reality created a myth that westernization is modernization. It is true that by far the largest corpus of ideas, thoughts, modes and methods of our life of the recent times are admittedly western by origin, yet the fact remains that as in the past,

so in our times too, there are ideas, visions, myths and symbols of Asian and non-western origin that have penetrated seminally into those of the west and hence, Indian reality cannot be perceived only through the west. Going the western way will not help us and therefore Mahatma Gandhi at the beginning of the century declared *Swaraj*. It does not mean only self-rule or freedom. *Swaraj* also means the protection and continuation of Indian ways of thinking, seeing, perceiving and experiencing reality. It means strengthening ourselves from within so that we may challenge and transform the existing system of development and the concept of modernity and create our own models of development and modernity which will be in pursuance with the traditional holistic view of man living in harmony with nature and society as well as exploring new innovations. After all as says Mahatma Gandhi, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any". He further says, "this synthesis will naturally be of the *Swadeshi* type, where each culture is assured its legitimate place, and not of the American pattern where one dominant culture absorbs the rest, and where the aim is not towards harmony, but towards an artificial and forced unity".

In spite of this kind of a view being prevalent in the fifties, the majority of the new writers portrayed a dreadfully artificial world based on some formulae of western modernism. This was done by the writers who knew it well that a majority of the old guards starting from Rabindranath Tagore were rooted in the Indian soil. Modernity for Tagore and Prem Chand and Kumaran Asan and others was to create a new approach to life. Writers like Tagore put forth some principles of modernism like universalism, permanence and *ananda* which make poetry look inward. Self-expression of the individual, utter nakedness (transparency), truthfulness, a negation of fashioning in order, tearing off the veil of illusion, definiteness and self-reliance were the characteristics of

modernity for the old guards. The writers drew largely on life for their themes, and new horizons opened up before them. When under the influence of the European modernist movement with a specific historical strain Yeats was writing, "Things fall apart, the Centre cannot hold," Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure." The Indian reality could not be interpreted by the western model created by movements like imagism, anti-novel, anti-play, anti-hero, expressionism, beat poetry, surrealism, avant-garde, and experimentalism.

There were experimentalists who showed concern with the inner reality, but the champions of inner reality mostly obsessed with sex produced erotic literature in different Indian languages. In fact, these writers regarded modernism as a 'measurement-oriented' intellectual approach, which fell short of the 'holistic experience' that related an individuals' centre to the physical and intellectual world and thus regained for him personal faith and identity and a sense of community.

The Indian mind does not refer to a tradition of the past or a tradition of the culture of the past. It believes that what exists today is tradition, is culture. In a culture like the Indian, the past does not pass off. It keeps on providing paradigms for the present. The present grows from the past and both, the past and the present, change together. But the rhythm broke down because of the modernistic experimentation in the early fifties drawing its sustenance from the west. Most of the Indian poets looked outside and accepted Eliot, Mallarmé, Yeats and Baudelaire as their models and in the process rejected Tagore, Bharati, Kumaran Asan, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi. But then these poets of the fifties and even the sixties developed an identity crisis. The specific identity crisis, the conflict between traditional Indianness and western modernity is discernible in the writings of the major language areas in India during those days. Because of the crisis, the predicament of the writers of the fifties and sixties can be analyzed through three divergent attitudes of life. Either the writer is in dispute with society or else he starts the

search and explores the contemporary reality and in the process goes in for a world belief, psychoanalysis, existentialist philosophy or social realism. But then this separates him from the common masses and their reality.

Even the advanced and progressive ideas that came from the western world through English education were confined to the educated urban community and grew independently without becoming a part of the continuity of the Indian literary process. However, the poetry of social realism became a dominant trend in contemporary Indian literature in the sixties and the seventies. After Independence, the poet felt a strong agony because of the pressure of disintegration of society and broken relationship with our past heritage. Besides, the poet had a coiled beam of hope of a nation and society affluent and flourishing. But with the passing of time, the dream remained unfulfilled, and when no fulfilment came till the sixties, the whole attitude to life took a different turn. In place of agony, resentment took over. Dreams and values were turned down as romantic sentimentality. Angry protests were raised against the political and social powers, institutions, establishment, and rejection of the constraining conventions became inevitable. The compelling situation drove the young poets to hostility and revolt—to frustration and extremity. The poets bade adieu to the earlier individualistic trend in poetry which had started with all kinds of experimentations in the early fifties. Poets now wrote on the theme of agony and the theme of struggle with clenched teeth. The poetry moved further nearer the downtrodden. Poets like Dhumil in Hindi showed a great range of social realism. O.N.V. Kurup in Malayalam added to his lyricism the sharpness of anger towards social injustice.

Now poetry is a combination of emotion, irony and the suffering of the common man caught in social contradictions. In the progressive poetry two trends were visible—one of the old unchanged trend of progressive poems of protests and struggle. One can take the name of Sri Sri, Nirala, Vaikom Muhammad Baser, and others who inspite of the

Bolshevik revolution and Marxist aesthetics drew sustenance mostly from the soil. This kind of poetry was the outcome of the nationalist consciousness created by the middle class Indian folk writers during the freedom movement. But after the fifties it moved a step further and became quite radical. Now the creed of militant young poets felt that bullet can achieve what the ballot had not. Alok Dhanva in Hindi wrote: "this is not poetry but bulletin to be shot at"; Baqar Mehdi in Urdu gave vent to the angry and rebellious mood of modern poetry. Telugu *digambar* (naked) poets in their figures and symbols mixed up the pleasant and the ugly; Chullikad in Malayalam took up the question of social justice and oppression while the Marathi *dalit* literature by poet Namdev Dhasal and Narayan Surve and novelist Laxman Gaikwad and others betrayed in the eighties the anguish of a community and demanded the shaping of a just and realistic future for the underprivileged and the outcasts. Gaikwad in his novel *The Pilferer* is more concerned with social change than the literariness of the artefact. The Kannada *Bandaya* (The Rebel) are concerned with forms of violence in a classless society. Literature moved nearer to the downtrodden and the exploited. In fact, the Naxalite movement of the seventies brought with it *Uttara Adhunikta* (post-modernism) which created in the Indian literary scene a new literary orientation. This was the time when Raghuvir Sahai in Hindi published another collection of poems *Hanso Hanso, Jaldi Hanso* (Laugh, Laugh, Laugh Soon) hinting at the impending political crisis. His poem *Ramdas* was a unique document of our feeling of insecurity. When Subhas Mukhopadhyaya in Bengali thought of the son who had gone to the forest, one was bound to remember almost a whole generation of youth who were thrown behind bars or went underground in the seventies during the Naxalite movement. Manjit Tiwana in Punjabi showed her bewilderment and asked: "What times are these/sitting on the threshold of it/we ask the whereabouts/of our home".

The second trend came as an integral part of the modern poetic sensibility, which did not have the fire amply demonstrated in the progressive poems of the sixties, seventies and in the Dalit poetry of the eighties, but now it is more ironical, artistic and aesthetical. One could find the beginning of this direction initially in the poems of Muktibodh in Hindi or Bishnu Dey in Bengali and some others. Muktibodh says that now "In this city, there is no sun or moon/In the mist of conspiracy there are shadows of ghosts/Under the slippers of Gandhi, army boots are reverberating/The selfish baboons are sitting on the turret of the fort/ the roads are dark/and, one can only listen to the poisonous whispers." Bishnu De on the other hand, reveals to us the poet's solitary struggle, his unending exploration of the beauty and dignity of human existence in opposition to the mounting crisis of uprooted identity. This is the predominant trend of the contemporary poetry. The contemporary poets in their satire and cynicism reflect a total view of their socio-cultural existence. What Bishnu De said long back, "Fear no more the dark/Cover your face with my hands" can now evidently be found in contemporary poetry.

It is just a coincidence that in western literature, modernism started falling apart in the 60s at the time of Vietnam, Woodstock, peace marches, race riots, demonstrations and violence. By 1968, minimalism, the last of the modernist styles, collapsed in heaps of rubble on gallery floors. In 1989 on the 3rd anniversary of André Breton's death, a group of followers announced that the historical period of surrealism had ended though it had some eternal values. By 1970 post-modernism became a new catchword. In place of technology, people now talked about ecology and return to nature. In place of progress and objective truth, people now talked about cooperation and interpreted truth as magical reality. The new trend was no more experimental and creation of new forms but went for the psychological and the narrational for personal content, life-like contexts, and subjective facts.

In the Indian context, *Uttara Adhunikta* (post-modernism) has arrived as a reaction to media-operated and market-

guided reality—a reaction to modernism of the sixties which was linked to a particular way and view of life, common in the western world and increasingly common in the affluent societies of east Asia and Latin America. It has come to challenge the very idea of Euro-centricist modernism, internationalism—the tendency to compare every literary text/trend with some Euro-American product. Now one realises that by borrowing things from the west one cannot bring about change and enter the realm of modernity. The elements of modernity are to be sought in our own roots and traditions—in our own realities. Our failure to bring about a true economic development, technological change and modernization is to be understood properly.

We come across many instances of writings trying to explore their roots and find their moorings, and probe whole areas of experience blurred during a period of extreme modernism of the last several decades. The Hindi poet Raghuvir Sahai bemoaned such a situation, “Can poetry change society/No, where there is too much of art/no change will occur.” Thayatu Sankaran in his book of criticism *Adhunikatayude Jirna Mukham* in Malayalam brought to our notice the decaying face of modernism. After a period of extreme modernism, the writers are now willing to convey the message in more direct terms. The modernist idea that anything simple should not be accepted is now questioned. It is established now that simple texts may present complex extra-textual structures. Even cultural references simply stated in poetry can have different romantic values. In fact, the contemporary writers now reflect a total view of their socio-cultural existence. The Gangeo Pattro group of Bengali critics called it ‘Total Poetry’.

When Rabindranath Tagore said there was a time when every (Indian) artist had the freedom of being Indian in a natural way, he was articulating a nostalgic awareness of the past as well as the bitter reality of the present. Now in the *Uttara Adhunik* era, the effort is to be natural, to be Indian, to be near the common man, to be socially conscious. The third generation of Malayalam writers like

N Prabhakaran, P Surendran prefers the term anti-modernism to post-modernism and are content simply to narrate human tales without any explicit social message or philosophical pretensions. Now Tamil writer Vannanilavan sums up this mood by saying, "we have stared enough at the skies/We have relished enough the fruits of freedom/let us become children. Zacharia, V.R. Sudeesh (Malayalam), Vijaydan Detha (Rajasthani), Surendra Kumar (Urdu) are now writing stories without any theoretical prejudices. In other words, it is developing a sense of Indianness, the manifestation of which Amitabh Gupta (Bengali) of the Gangeo Pattro group found first in the 19th century Bengali literature and then in the first two decades of the twentieth century literature.

One of the dominant trends visible in the *Uttara Adhunik* literature is the use of mythology to present the modern predicament. Mythic thoughts, in fact, are attempts to mediate the gaps between continuity and change, thereby authenticating the idea of 'total poetry' with reference to man's existence—both mundane and spiritual. In Agyeya's (Hindi) poetry we find a shift towards the realization that the individual's entity is just a humble part of the larger reality. Ramakanta Rath (Oriya) affirms in his *Radha* man's relationship to the transcendent by using, the mythical past. In contemporary Indian poetry along with a sense of urbanity, an attitude of irony, frequent use of mythological sequences as structural images, a continuous involvement with the problems of expediency and eternity are very much visible. Playwrights like Girish Karnad, Kambiar (Kannada), Mani Madhukar (Hindi), G P Deshpande, Satish Alekar (Marathi), Manoj Mitra and Bibhas Chakravarti (Bengali) are using myths, folk legends and religio-centric tradition to understand our present day existence. In the Indian post-modernist period, the departure from Euro-centricist modernism has created a new literary code, the socio-cultural mythical code—which is used in the organization of poetry by Kunwar Narayan (Hindi), Dilip Chitre (Marathi), Sankha Ghosh (Bengali), and in novels

by Bhyrappa (Kannada), Prapanchan (Tamil) and others. Myth is now accepted as a meaningful sub-text of the literary text. Even in novels dealing with city life, the familiar frustrated young urban male protagonist lives on, on one side with his racial unconsciousness and talks of idealism and spirituality, and the other feels trapped between the inner lack of freedom and progress, and the external imposition of a free and progressive existence.

In the field of novel and short-story, contemporary writers go for the material or the living experience of life. Without exception to any big social or psychological truth, the writer depicts experiences taken from dual contacts with the milieu and the environment and makes it relevant in the modern context. The genuineness of individual experience of the modern short-story writer highlights many problems of the modern society and brings us face to face with the dilemma of inter-relationship and broken values. In this process, the totality of inter-relationship and values become clear.

The contemporary short-story writer has made new experiments with structure. In this, the plot is not built up as an organic whole having a beginning, a middle and an end with dramatic twists like the plot of a drama. In this, a single point of the life circle is reconstructed in a creative and artistic way. These stories unravel every aspect of the reality of life. The impact of the aesthetic value of the story does not rest in the end of the story. The conventional style of 'story telling' is discarded. It obtains the help of symbols, images and other poetic means to magnify a particular moment in life. Nirmal Verma (Hindi), U R Ananthamurthy (Kannada), Mani Manikyam (Telugu) and many others have made their presence felt in this area.

In novels, besides the living experience, the writers show concern for the neglected regions of this vast country. The novelists dealing with a region and having a living experience of the life pattern of that area, understand every feeling, need and the urge of that region. A writer selects the life of a particular region where he has stayed

but in fact projects the image of the life-pattern of the Indian people, because India still lives in villages and different regions rather than in the cities. Tara Shankar Banerjee (Bengali), Bhagwati Charan Verma (Hindi), Phaniswar Renu (Hindi), Akhilan (Tamil) and others wrote novels to expose the abysses of passion and hopelessness, the strength and weakness, the beauty and the ugliness of the community staying in a particular region. Contemporary Indian novels by Jayamohan (Tamil), Debes Ray (Bengali), Shivprasad Singh (Hindi), dealing with various neglected regions and the spoken dialect of that area, give a composite picture of total India pulsating with new experience and struggling for keeping the old values and in the process sometimes discarding them. In this period of *Uttara Adhunikta*, these novels dramatise the shift of the dominant from problems of knowing to problems of modes of being. It gives a glimpse of actual India which stays in villages where people of different religions stay together. There, culture is a composite culture. It is not possible to undo this situation prevailing in Indian villages. Rahi Masoom Raza (Hindi, Urdu) explains this in a very interesting way in the introduction of his novel, *Adha Gaon* (Half Village), "why should I allow anybody to ask me to leave my village Gangoli and go, for example to Rai Bareli? Why shall I go sir? I won't go".

These novelists of a region have forcefully demolished the myths created by the western Indologists that Indianness is just fatalism or Indianness is to be identified with harmony and order and that the Indian vision cannot perceive its own reality and that the two-nation theory is to be applied to India.

Those novels are also important where the social life of the city-dwellers is delineated with all sincerity, but at the same time, without giving any importance to the pseudo and subjective formula of modernism. Though it is difficult to paint authentically the life of the city, as here, the life has many barriers and also the life of the novelist is bound with his own complexities. The central tension

in the vast majority of contemporary Indian novelists is that of transition from a rural and traditional to an urban and modern situation, expressed either through a romantic nostalgia for the village left behind or through fear and hatred of the cruel impersonal city with all its sex, horror, violence and cruelty. Thakazhi Shivsankar Pillai (Malayalam), Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya (Assamese), Pannalal Patel (Gujarati), Quratulain Hyder (Urdu), Mannu Bhandari (Hindi), Nayantara Sahgal (English), Bhyrappa (Kannada), V Ballal (Kannada), V Bedekar (Marathi), Samaresh Basu (Bengali), and others with their rural-urban sensitivity have portrayed the Indian experience in its totality.

In short, there are some specific social phenomena shared by all Indians like the breakdown of the joint family system, breakdown of the rural middle class, exploitation by politicians and the business community, the communal problem, problems of rural poverty and urban unemployment, the frustration of the educated unemployed, general middle-class taboo on sex and endless religious superstition. All these provide a common bond and make the Indian protagonist the familiar frustrated young urban male who, on one side, lives with his racial unconscious and talks of idealism and spirituality and on the other feels trapped between the inner lack of freedom and of progress, and the external imposition of a free and progressive existence. But one can feel that the slant is more towards an exploration of all that is embedded in the racial unconscious.

These writers are discovering their roots and a sense of belonging and trying to understand the Indian reality in terms of their past experience or tradition. Tradition in the Indian context is not a fixed entity within a time span. Indian literary concepts like *Marg-Desi*, *Shastrachara-Deshachara*, *Natyadharmi-Lokadharmi* reveal the dialectics of continuity and change rooted in the Indian tradition. So contemporary Indian writers like Binapani Mohanty, Pravasini Mahakund (Oriya), Afsar Ahmed, Anil Ghorai (Bengali), Kumar Pash (Urdu), Surjit Pattar (Punjabi), Savitri Rajeevan (Malayalam), and Ki Rajanarayanan (Tamil) have

their tradition as well as social questions connected with it. These writers have made an effort to retrieve, rediscover and redefine elements of culture in a creative way, by a return to pride in roots while looking ahead.

In the field of theatre, particularly in the sixties and seventies, Badal Sarkar, Mohan Rakesh and Girish Karnad described the condition of nothingness and absurdity, but with the hope that reason can and will exert a selection-pressure in the right direction. This is the racial unconscious giving shape to Indian literature even during the days of a near total disintegration—emotional and otherwise. Then comes the age of contemporary group theatre run by amateurs who combined the truth of object with the outer reality. As against this, in the regular auditoriums the 'other theatre' continued with its social awareness, giving a new perspective to the function of theatre in society. It combines the truth of object with the inner reality to foster a new dimension of change in experience. This theatre is seeking the 'Chariot in darkness', because in the contemporary theatre man has been robbed of his metaphor—the metaphor of the invincible soul of man. This other theatre is struggling hard to discover this metaphor and re-establish confidence in man. Now we see in this theatre people who can give away their life in their struggle for a cause—for the emancipation of the suppressed. These people are *Bhoma* of Badal Sarkar (Bengali) or *Hanus* of Bhisham Sahani (Hindi). That's why the history of the contemporary 'other theatre' is the history of extending the social schema.

Aesthetic response is connected with social schema which, if extended by the writer on the basis of complex social conditioning, can be meaningful. Now in plays like *Poster* by Shankar Shesh (Hindi) or *Spartacus* by Utpal Dutt (Bengali), an effort can be discerned for an 'epistemological rupture' in the existing structure to allow us to transcend the life attitudes created by the formula and market-oriented modernism. Transcendence of this attitude, sometimes with the help of an extensive use of folk elements, allows a 'complex seeing' of alternative points of view.

The energy of folk theatre comes from the fact that although it seems to uphold traditional values, it has also the means of questioning these values. Now the dialectics of continuity and change are creating a dilemma, but even in the face of this dilemma the writer is affirming his identity with the tradition as well as with the complex social conditioning to unfold a total view of the Indian psyche. Sometimes the dilemma takes its toll and the writer ends up with an eye to expedience and forgets about the enduring totality.

In fact, this is commercialism which has captured the literary market in the last decades of the century. In the Dravidian languages, popular serials of different kinds seem to be a craze. Telugu writers, like Malladi Venkatakrishna Murti or Yerramsetti Sai trade on the reader's nostalgia, with descriptions of men and women in their pristine simplicity against the primitive background of mountains, jungles and rivulets or they seek to explore the reader's longing for forgotten history and visionary romance, or they describe black magic, voodoo and witchcraft. In Tamil also, one can see the ever-increasing market for pulp 'pocket' novels. In Gujarati, either the novel is cheap pulp, or it is an academic exercise.

However, the most interesting aspect that one notices in Indian literature today is a fierce trend of polarisation due to the onslaught of commercialism. Now the battle lines have been drawn with so much gusto that for many up and coming writers of today, commercial magazines, however prestigious they may be, are taboo. The Tamil little magazine *Ka Cha Da Tha Pa Ra* says in its manifesto, "we care a damn about those who barter literature for a living. We care two hoots for those who are keenly in search of the buttered side of the literary loaf."

It is true that little magazines like *Pahal* (Hindi), *Anustup* (Bengali), *Tatparya* (Marathi), *Vasagan* (Tamil), *Rujuwatu* (Kannada), *Nagmani* (Punjabi) are carrying on a continuous interrogation of both literary modes and social assumption and turning them into vehicles, by

means of which the real vitality of a culture survives, but at the same time to draw a battle line and condemn in the name of popular literature is not acceptable to many. *Padigal*, a little Tamil magazine, says literature should not, in the name of fighting popularism, become anti-people. However commercialization and the subsequent pressure, both insidious and open, have compelled even gifted writers like Sunil Gangopadhyay and Shirshendu Mukherjee (Bengali) to churn out instant novels and then regret it in private, having written them. It is true that because of the lotus-eating habit of the reader, the formula-based and easily readable novels are written, but at the same time experimentation also continues with a clever mixture of the readers' curiosity, the publishers' handout and the critics' eulogy. In recent times, stories like *Tirich* (Hindi) by Uday Prakash or by U R Ananthamurthy (Kannada) became a high point for discussion in the literary circle. With the help of magic reality, they brutally expose the psychology of a sick society. In Kannada literature, one of the attempts is to grasp the significance of the culture of the collective and another to understand the dangers of the commercializing culture. If Devanoor Mahadeva, who belongs to the *Bandaya* movement stands for the latter, T G Ragava represents the former.

In fact, *dalit* writers like Namdev Dhasal, Narayan Surve (Marathi), Yoseph Macwan (Gujarati), T B Siddalingaiah (Kannada), in their writings raise the question of social justice and oppression, and betray the anguish of a community and demand the shaping of a just and realistic future for the under-privileged and the outcasts in society. The Marathi *dalit* novelist Laxman Gaikwad is more concerned for a social change than the literariness of the artefact. *dalits* now challenge the tone and content of the existing literary canon created by the *Shastra* protagonists and decentralize the whole process of a literary movement. It creates an alternative aesthetics and extends the linguistic and generic possibilities of literature. Otherwise also, larger

humanitarian concerns and social issues like protection of ecology, scarcity of water in villages, violence towards women, the case of corrupt politicians and mafia menace are receiving due attention in the writings of different Indian languages. Contemporary women writers like Raji Seth (Hindi), Jaya Mitra (Bengali), Savitri Rajeevan (Malayalam), Manjit Tiwana (Punjabi) and others with their strong feminist understanding have emerged strongly in all Indian languages attacking the existing male dominated social order by using revisionary myths and counter-metaphors. Veterans like Mahashweta Devi (Bengali) are relentless in their exposé of the western mode of development with totalizing tendencies and go for alternative models of development which would allow for the rhythm and movement of human life to be in accordance with nature. Femininity, by definition, for these writers, is not a limiting value but an expanding one—holistic, eclectic, trans-specific and encompassing of diverse stirrings.

It is generally said that we are living in an impoverished literary age having no more stalwarts like Tara Shankar Banerjee, Pottekat, Premchand or Gopinath Mohanty. But, what is missing in fact, is a society with enough literary perception to ensure celebrity status to new talents and thus to ensure a continuity between generations. What is further missing is a literary life, continuous exchange, a constantly open debate between writers and other members of the society who speak the language of honest men. In the present day situation, it has become impossible for writers to recommit to a *cause mobilisation* for collective action. We can only hope that by the turn of the century, writers will re-establish their position. □

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

R K Murthi

Man has always been a dreamer. For dreams are essentially of the mind and have been sustained and nourished through the ages by the word. "In the beginning is the word," affirms the Bible. Hindu religious texts speak of *Naadam Brahma*, echoing the same note. The word surged ahead of symbols, gestures, nods, winks and expressions, which today enrich all forms of performing arts. It meant everything to man. He sensed that silence was not always golden. Not where he wanted to communicate more effectively. He learnt to associate words with people, animals, things or ideas. That marked the beginning of literature.

Evolution of Literature

The dreams of the people first found expression in the tales of the time. The epics, the folktales, the mythologies and the vast horde of literature of all ages, which form the rich heritage of mankind, were the end product of dreams, joining hands with fancies and getting cloaked in the finery of words. Every creative work, therefore, reflected the quest of man for progress. *The Outline of Literature*, edited by John Drinkwater, tells us:

when literature came to be created and man started to write, he naturally first wrote down those well-known stories, which had been repeated from generation to generation, adding something of its own, of the mysteries of life and death and of man's general relation to the world in which he lived...They

include myths concerning the origin of the world and the origin of man; myths concerning the arts of life, that is to say, stories telling how man learned the use of the bow and the plough, how he learned the art of pottery; myths concerning the sun and the moon and the stars; myths concerning death; and finally and perhaps most interesting, romantic myths... There is no more interesting and important fact in human history than the universality of folk songs and legends. There is an amazing similarity between the subjects of the songs of the East and the songs of the West, and stories were common to all the people of the world.

Pushpak in the *Ramayana*, as much as the magic carpet in *The Arabian Nights* or the flight of Icarus in Greek mythology, indicate the dream our forefathers had of flying. Mind reading or *Gyan Drishti* can well be considered the precursor of the electronic eavesdropping of today. The characters in some of the epics could change form at will. Maarich took the form of a golden deer; Hanuman stretched his tail in order to provide a spring cushion to gain the height to have an eyeball to eyeball confrontation with Ravana; Lord Vishnu took the forms of animals in some of his incarnations (*avatars*).

The power to produce something with a mere wave of the hand, a miracle which *swamis* and *sanyasis* perform even today, was shared by many characters in the epics, the folktales and the mythologies. The Yamuna was in spate, but it let Vasudev get across with the child Krishna; the sea parted and made way for Moses the moment he waved the hand commanding the sea to do just that.

Another power, which the creative writers lend to the characters make us green with envy. The characters could transport themselves from place to place, go into the depth of the earth, plunge to the bottom of the seas and move to other planets at will. Sage Viswamitra, so say our epics, created a *Swarg* for Trishanku, which was somewhere between heaven and earth. How close that dream world is to the satellites and space platforms of today!

In all these tales, we find the child's viewpoint dominant. They reflect the essence of wisdom that is struck by Francis Thompson:

Know what it is to be a child? It is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ears; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its soul.

The fairy godmother sent Pandit Vishnu Sharma to a native ruler, whose young princes were wayward. Panditji shaped the minds of the princes through tales with the right messages. These tales now comprise the *Panchatantra*. We may claim with justifiable pride that Aesop and La Fontaine drew many story lines from the *Panchatantra*. *Katha Sarit Sagara* and the *Jataka Tales*, apart from folk tales and tribal lore, which also enriched the world of the Indian child.

State of Stupor

However, India sank into a state of stupor. The west surged ahead, while India stagnated. Hans Christian Andersen became the darling of children, first in his country, and then, through translation, all around the world. Lewis Carroll sent Alice to the Wonderland for thrilling adventures. Jules Verne, H G Wells and Robert Luis Stevenson showed how science fiction could captivate the mind of the child. Enid Blyton tried her hand at everything from tales of tricky Brer Fox to sharper Brer Rabbit and to adventures with child heroes. These movements remained outside the ken of India till about the turn of this century. We may note that India and children's literature in India began their tryst with destiny together.

Rejuvenation

Around this time, Shankar Pillai, better known as cartoonist Shankar, got the bright idea of holding an international competition for children. Pandit Nehru

supported the idea. Thus was laid the seed for the Children's Book Trust (CBT). There were hardly any writer for children. So Shankar started retelling the stories from the epics and the *puranas* himself, using several pen names in order to create an impression that the Trust had more authors than one. He illustrated most of the books. These books were run-away successes. For once children found books that were attractively designed, well-produced. Select books were translated into other Indian languages too.

Shankar identified potential writers and illustrators, induced them to write or illustrate for children, ran a workshop for writers, which, in 1981, took a new form as the Association of Writers & Illustrators for Children. He held competitions and offered prizes to writers who turned out novels, travelogues, short stories, biographies, picture books and science-based books. These competitions have become a regular feature of the activities of the Children's Book Trust.

Shankar's work ran parallel to the efforts of the National Book Trust (NBT), which too was the brainchild of Pandit Nehru. He assigned to the NBT the task of producing books for the young and the old, to take them to all corners of India through translations. NBT conceived the idea of *Bal Pustakalaya*, invited well known litterateurs and eminent illustrators to write for children. This too enriched the field of children's literature.

These developments injected fresh vigour into all areas of children's literature and brought about much needed transformation. It may be rewarding to mention the progress achieved in diverse areas of literature for the young.

Poems for the Young

Since time immemorial, lullabies, nursery rhymes, rhyming verses have been used to entertain the child, or to bring a smile on his face, or to put him to sleep, or to provide the backdrop for the games he plays. They are laden with little nuggets of wisdom, small bits of information.

No verse is bereft of nuggets of wisdom. Not even the nonsense verses, (They turn easy on the tongue) of which

Edward Lear remains the super star. Listen to this: "There was an Old Man of Dumbree,/Who taught little owls to drink tea./For he said, To eat mic/Is not proper or nice." It gives a cue that owls feed on mice. Sukumar Ray's nonsense verses (in Bengali) too have rhyme and rhythm, as much as subtle meanings.

Good verses which have survived the ravages of time entertain and inform. *Omanathingal Kidavo, nalla komala tamarapoovo* (Malayalam); or *Odi Vilayadu Papa* (Tamil); *Chandamama door ke* and *Bade chalo, bade chalo* (Hindi); or *Chandamama, Chandamama, teep diya ja* and *Abol Tabol* (Bengal); *Mithu Mithu Popata* (Marathi); *Sri Ranga Deva Lalee* (Telugu) are some of the tunes which have become part of our heritage not only because they fall well on the ears, but also have basic information, deftly woven into them.

This skill, which had remained in a state of limbo, surged back with vigour after 1947. Then came inspiring songs like *Hum Honge Khamiyab, Ek Din* (We will triumph, one day) in Hindi; *Oru Velicham, thari velicham, Akaleninnoru pori velicham*. (A light,/a tiny light,/From a distance,/a mere spark of light) in Malayalam; *Bara Saji nana bira pari/Asi neba apa hasta dhari,/Sabudina pain jiba apa/Se katha bhabile mana khapa*, (Like the hero/The bridegroom will come;/He will hold my sister's hand and go away./We are sorry! She will go away from us for ever), in Oriya. (These are just three samples taken at random to drive home to point. Such spirited verses have enriched all the Indian languages since 1947).

Poems from young are often from the young themselves. The Pioneer carried, on December 17 1995, a poem, by 14-year-old Rimina Mohapatra. "Sometimes I feel there is a world behind the mirror,/It must be quite different from ours./It may be more gay and merrier too/If one day I jump into the mirror,/Then what would happen, I wonder!/The sight of me would surprise the folks there./And if there was no one to spot me,/I'd creep into the unknown city,/Seeing all the wonderful things,/And hearing all the funny languages,/I would tip-toe in the mirror world." Such poems evoke laughter, mirth and merriment.

Poems which deal with the developments in the field of science and technology too are popular. Innovative songs have come in to help the child master and alphabets or the number sequence or the sound which animals and birds produce or the group words.

The poems are sustained by native tradition, yet throb with the ideas and concepts of the present. So they have found ready acceptance. However, mere acceptance doesn't longevity assure. Time is a rigorous examiner. It relentlessly dumps anything that does not measure up to the highest standards. Rightly did Leonard Clark note, "The poems should be full of feeling and concerned with life as it is...They should include strong images and should have a variety of techniques, rhyme or no rhyme, metrical or non-metrical. They should never be sentimental, coy or too nostalgic." Yet one feels that the fine art of poetry for the young has found its wings again. No longer is the art bereft of the power to soar imaginatively.

Comics

India picket up the style of presentation of tales through blocks of pictures, with words getting relegated to the background. Evolved in the West, the style put in firm roots in India after independence. A debate is raging, even today, about the impact of comics on the child. However, there is a measure of agreement that comics act like the appetizer before a full course.

In India, comics were first used, most effectively, as a means of introducing children to the epics and classics and also to capsule the biographies of eminent Indians, by Anant Pai. His *Amar Chitra Katha* series became a rock buster. Anant Pai brought out the comics in several Indian languages. So, they cut across regional and linguistic barriers.

What are the positive features of comics? The visual impact is impressive. The action is depicted through a series of drawings, each one embellished with minimum words to sustain the main themes. Comics blend words and pictures, and hence can be considered to be a form of picture books, though comics are less glossy and the story element much more complex.

While Anant Pai knew where to draw the line, as far as comics are concerned, this genre of visual recital of stories has been hijacked by some publishers to tell eerie tales...ghost stories or fantasies in which violence and super-natural elements and improbabilities and superstitions thrive. Such comics have flooded the market.

Is this a temporary phase? Will comic strips that churn out unhealthy entertainment be laid to rest? Will the wings of change deliver a deadly punch on comics that pollute young minds? It will be hazardous to make a categorical prediction.

Children take to comics with delight. Yet soon they realise that comics have certain limits. They are slender books and often skip or leave out many strange turns and twists in the tales. Children somehow identify this limitation. Then comes a desire to read the tales in a fuller form. The children turn to the epics and classics retold by men like Rajagopalachari and Shankara Pillai and Manoj Das. (In England, Charles Lamb and his sister Mary Lamb set the trend by retelling the plays of Shakespeare). That is the positive fall-out of comics.

Picture Books for the Very Young

The picture books made small beginning in India in the 50s. This Genre of literature, aimed at entertaining tiny tots and children below the age of 8, was also a take off from the West.

The basics of picture books are. a) easy to read text, b) simple themes, c) struggles of humans or animals caught and their final triumphs, d) colourful illustrations, e) catchy jackets, and f) good paper.

Initially, popular stories, (Drawn from *Panchatantra* stories or *Jataka* Tales or *the Ramayana* or *the Mahabharata*), which had entertained children for centuries, were retold through picture books. The texts were in English or Hindi.

Encouraged by the tremendous success of the first picture books, publishers tried out original stories. These books were lapped up readily children. It soon became clear

that children enjoyed new stories, told effectively through picture books.

The Children's Book Trust and the National Book Trust pioneered the movement. NBT experimented, successfully, with picture books in which there are no texts, only illustrations. (Examples: The Balloon). Ratna Sagar came up with a collection of picture books, written by Manorama Jafa. Frank brothers followed suit with excellent picture books by Deepa Agarwal and Neeta Beri.

The CBT, having established its re-eminence in this branch of children's books, turned to environment protection, gender equality etc. to provide themes for picture books.

Illustrators scaled great heights with this genre of books for the young. Among the names which come to mind are Mickey Patel, Abid Surti, Jagdish Joshi, B G Varma, Subir Roy, Tapal Guha. They swung high with the opportunities the picture books provided. They gave wings to their creativity, experimented with many forms of illustrations...the stylized versions of the art forms of yore, collages, cartoons, cut-and-paste etc. Some of them received recognition at the Nomo Concours contest.

Today, illustrators are straining at the leash, seeking freedom to soar freely along flights of fancy, eager to enrich the world of children's books. So the picture book of the future will carry unmistakable imprints of the illustrators.

The picture book will be suitably adapted, in the foreseeable future, to introduce children to the basics of science and technology, to give them insight into how man can live in harmony with nature, to develop a healthy respect for all forms of life.

Most picture books, even today, are produced by NBT and CBT. The original texts of these books are in English or Hindi. Picture books in other Indian languages fall far short of the need. The number of new titles which appear is abysmally low. The quality of production too is not such as to enthuse the young readers.

Will the picture book surmount these limitations? Then we remember the economics of production. The basics behind picture books necessarily lead to high production

cost. Unless the print order is substantially large, (at least 10,000), the cost per copy becomes prohibitively high. Most publishers of books for the young, in the Indian languages, have reservations about their ability to widen the sales net.

Unless a miracle happens, original picture books for the young will remain confined, mostly, to the two major languages, English and Hindi.

Riddles and Puzzles and Quizzes

We are living in an age of quizzing. Older children find delight in taking up the challenge offered by quizzes. The genesis of the quiz can be traced to the rich tradition of the past talent in riddles and puzzles.

Nobody knows who invented the first puzzle or riddle. For puzzles and riddles have been part of India's heritage. Mostly they are rhyming verses. They rouse the curiosity of children and provoke them to seek the answers. One may call this a form of cerebral detection.

The tradition grew from strength to strength. More and still more riddles and puzzles came into circulation. Many of them became part of our heritage. They became universal. They became part of the oral tradition.

India too came out with puzzles and riddles for the young. I was pleasantly surprised to find a collection of modern riddles and puzzles, *Aararu Chollum* in Malayalam and *Koida Sangraha* in Gujarati. Almost all languages in India have regular input riddles and puzzles.

However, the pace of growth of intellectually stimulating riddles and puzzles in verse forms is rather slow. The reason, perhaps, lies in the overbearing dominance of the quiz.

The quiz is a take off from the West. It caught up in India as part of an ad campaign. The Bourneville Quiz Contest over All India Radio helped the growth of this genre of brain storming.

Writers and publishers noticed how avidly children took to the quiz programme. They did not miss the cue. Today we have a large collection and quiz books, dealing with all topics under the sky...science, history, geography,

literature, arts. Publishers hold out the message, "You say it and we have it."

Intellectual stimulation, for the older child, is also provided through brain teasers, crossword puzzles etc. A mastery over these intellectual pursuits is seen as the passport to success in life, as almost all selectors include teasers to test the aspirant's IQ. With knowledge exploding at a very fast pace, quiz books and teasers are gearing for a quantum jump in the years to come.

Fun-way to Knowledge

Is there any easy way to learn? Can acquirement of knowledge be fun? If so how does one identify this path? Experiments in this direction, initiated in some of the developed nations, are making an impact in our milieu too.

School text books are usually too academic and give scant attention to the fun element. They overlook the fact that children find more pleasure in learning if the study material rouses their curiosity through deft use of the texts and attractive illustrations.

While text books continue to plough along conventional lines, many writers for children have taken up the challenge of defining the fun-way to knowledge. They have produced books which inform and entertain.

In Tamil, Kalvi Gopalakrishnan has done pioneering work in taking scientific concepts to children. The language is simple; the concept well-thought out and deftly woven into the story. In Malayalam, Siraj Minatheri sensed the apathy to mathematics have responded with enthusiasm to the books in English (They have now been translated into Hindi too), on the basic elements, water, air etc. by Dilip Salwi, (Ratna Sagar); and to the book, *Science: Nature's Copy Cat* by R K Murthi, (Publication Division).

The range of topics which came under this category is infinite. The human body and its mysteries thrill young children. (The Readers Digest carried articles titled, I am John's Liver, I am John's Heart etc. Even today, after four decades of their initial publication, older children find them immensely fascinating.

History provides a trigger to good informative books. Ghulam Hyder wrote an Urdu novel, tracing the progress of stone age man from wilderness to cultivation. India's freedom movement received attention from writers in all Indian languages. *Swarajyam Naa Janma Hakku* (Freedom is our Birth-right) in Telugu, set the role of local heroes in the struggle in the right perspective. Sarojini Sinha resurrected the drama of the Salt Satyagraha in her book, *A Pinch of Salt Rocks an Empire. Mile Stone 50*, a collection of exciting stories of daring of those who fought for India's freedom, (R K Murthi, Vikas) became a runaway success.

Equally fascinated are the older children by information books on people and places, discoveries and inventions, science and technology, environment and ecology, flora and fauna, and many more branches of knowledge.

They also find delight in reading biographical sketches or profiles of eminent people who have left their imprints on the sands of time. NBT was the first to take to biographies. CBT brought out a series of slim volumes of such sketches, which was widely commended.

In the regional languages, such books form an essential part of the programmes of most publishers. The added edge here is provided by the inclusion of heroes who belong to the local milieu, with whom the children find easy identification.

It is evident that informative books for the young command a ready market. One envisages a bright future for books which bring knowledge to children in the form that appeals to them best.

However, most of these books, in the regional languages, are shoddily produced, poorly designed, carelessly proof read. An exception is the *Bal Shabd Kosh*, produced by the Association of Writers & Illustrators for Children.

South sex be dealt with in informative books? Exposed to the visual media, they gain, at an early age, an insight into some basic facts. The tale of the stork bringing babies doesn't jell, any more. One child, after listening to the old tale of the stork or the fairy gifting the baby observed, "No baby was born in our house in the normal way." Writers have started taking note of this change. They are deftly

using books to educate children about nature's myriad methods of propagating the species.

No topic is taboo. Mollie Hunter, an eminent children's writer, says, "Don't underestimate children's capacity for grasping abstracts. I have found, over and over again, that young readers will see something to which the mind of the old ready is closed." Leonard Clark adds, "Children are able, at a very young age, to penetrate, with uncanny power and direction, to the naked heart of even the most complex matters."

The appeal of informative books is growing, by leaps and bounds. For them the best times is just round the corner.

Fiction

There is nothing that fascinates the child more than good fiction. It takes many forms...The epics and the mythologies and the folktales are fictions at its best. So are the novels and the novelettes, the short stories and the mini stories, the dramas and the stage plays. All are packs of entertainment.

Children enjoy the best of fiction, culled from the rich heritage of India. The epics have many stories which entertain the children.

The novel, as a genre of fiction, began in the West. Scott, Dickens, Eliot, Stevenson, Dumas, Hugo, E B White, Steinbeck are some of the authors very popular with children. The short sotires of Maugham and Saki and Maupassant and O'Henry provide sheer delight to childrne. The dramas of Shakespeare and Barnard Shaw too appeal to the higher age group. The scientific nobels and short stories of writers like Jules Verne, H G Wells, Arthur C Clarke, Asimov and Ray Bradbury and mysteries, adventure stories and thrillers from the West are also very popular.

Publishers of children's book in Indian lanaugages have exploited this demand and brought out the best of such fictional books in Indian languages.

While one can't minimize the popularity of these books, one has to admit that they are not ideal substitutes for stories set in native surroundings, Luckily, there is a rich

stock of entertaining novels, short stories, dramas for the young in the Indian languages. Many writers, now have set their hand at producing original novels and stories. They deal with a wide variety of themes.

The social problems which are peculiar to India get reflected in the creative work of many writers. Gender equality is central to some creative fiction. The lessons they convey do not obtrude or stand out. Arup Kumar Dutta's *Kaziranga Trail Marks*, in a way, the moment of awakening of the hidden potential of Indian writers to this genre of fiction. Quick to widen the opportunity were writers like Nilima Sinha and Deepa Agarwal.

History is a rich source of themes for novels or short stories for the young. All Indian languages have stories built around heroes or heroines of the past, like Rana Pratap, Tantya Tope, Rani of Jhansi, Velu Thampi Kattabomman, Surya Sen and Bhagat Singh. Mystery or adventure are the themes of some of the popular books for the young.

Incidents and experiences of children at home or at school or elsewhere, when fictionalized, entertain. Many writers have got the cue. So the future of fictional work for the young looks bright. Specially novel and short stories which have science, mystery, adventure or valour as core themes are bound to be roaring successes. Swapna Dutta's *Juneli* series belong to this genre.

The art of story telling is undergoing rapid change. The style is more direct, more incisive, more craftily evolved. The techniques, topics and settings too show wide variety.

One cannot miss the surge of popularity of short story collection. Many publishers, these days, concentrate on collection of short stories. Such collections command good sales. So, one may say that the short story is bound to get the maximum mileage in the years to come. One such collection is titled, *There's Another way*, (Vikas 1998).

Magazines

So far, so good. But has enough been done to produce good magazines? In the beginning, we had only *Chandamama*. It still appears (It has several language editions too), and retains its popularity. But many parents

feel that the magazine sets limits by concentrating on mythology and folk tales. Superstitions, magic and miracles form the essential ingredients of most of the stories.

There was a need for more magazines for the young. Shankar started *Children's World* to fill this gap. Then came *Target*, (Alas! It died with Roaslyn Wilson, a creative editor), *Champak*, *Gokulam* and few more. In the regional languages too, children's magazines sprouted.

All the magazines have their stock of traditional tales drawn from folk literature or mythology or history. There are also stories which are set in the present context, which inculcate, often subtly, but more often brashly, certain value system.

A rough assessment indicates that about 60 per cent of the pages of the magazines are filled by stories, which entertain, and mostly improve the reader's linguistic ability. It is in the remaining 40 per cent space of the magazines that the new trends become perceptible.

Every magazine provides about five to six poems. The poets exploit the rhythm and the rhyme that lift poetry to great heights. Children read the poems, again and again, memorise them without making conscious efforts.

The creativity of the child is given scope through line drawings which can be coloured. The pictures are of animals and birds, of plants and trees, of means of transport like the bullock cart or horse-drawn buggy or scooter or car or bus.

Informative articles...about distant lands or tourist spots; of the mountains and the plateaus; of the oceans and ocean currents; of the Antarctic and the Arctic, of the achievements of great men, of scientists and their discoveries...make the magazines more appealing.

Riddles and puzzles and contests also provoke the children. The children are offered token incentives to enter the contests. (Fifty years back, when I was a child, the *Illustrated Weekly* used to have a section for the very young. It used to contain lots of information. It also used to set challenges. These challenges were story writing, essay writing, letter writing, painting set scenes etc. We used to

enter the contests with immense enthusiasm. And when any one of us in our household...we are six, of which *Hum Panch*, we five were in the age group 5 to 14...won a prize, we felt right on top of the world). Most children's magazines rouse the children's interests by offering prizes.

The cartoon strips and the retorts and repartee which are picked up from the world of the child too are well-received by the readers.

Magazines for the young are striving to keep abreast of modernity. They are bound to break new grounds in the years to come. For today one finds the emergence, slow of course, of competent editors, who understand the needs of the child and are willing to change the formats to suit the needs of the target audience.

Other Media

Technology is getting ready to make inroads into the field of entertainment for children. Many popular jingles are now available in audio cassettes. Recently CBT produced video cassettes of some picture books. They have become best sellers.

Cassettes, audio or video, have their distinct advantages. The narrator has a good diction. (It is the skill which earns him or her the assignment). So the children, by listening to the cassettes, get the correct pronunciation of words. The visual impact of video cassettes adds to their popularity. So this genre of entertainment for children is bound to grow rapidly.

It is necessary to strike a note of caution here. The cassettes hold with them the danger of the children not going to the books. If this happens, the ability to read, which is closely linked with the ability to write well, is likely to become weak. Parents and elders have to ensure that this does not happen.

Competent Editors

In the last two decades, professional editors of children's literature have surfaced. Many of them were inducted into the field and trained by editors like Shankar,

K Ramakrishnan, late Rosalind Wilson, (of *Target*), Dr H K Devsare, Jai Prakash Bharati and Al Valliappa.

These editors today play a double role...of editor and critic too. Bertha Mahoney says, "Art flourishes where there is sound critical judgement to examine and appraise. The critic...must have a real point of view about his subject. The essential point of view grows out of acquaintance with the best children's books, past and present, and also with the world's best literature for everyone. This point of view—this measuring stick—must also bear some relation to children themselves and their reaction to books today."

There is need for more critics to judge the books for the young and to steer the growth along healthy lines.

Librarians too have a vital role to play in developing the love for books among children. However, exclusive libraries for children and competent librarians who understand the needs of children are few and far between. Most schools have no libraries. Even where libraries exist, competent librarians are not available.

In public schools, the stress is on books by English authors. No effort has been made to promote the books of Indian authors, even where they are available. A beginning in this direction was made by the Association of Writers & Illustrators for Children (AWIC).

The AWIC

Shankar identified potential writers and illustrators, induced them to write or illustrate for children, ran a workshop for writers, which, in 1981, took a new form as the Association of Writers & Illustrators for Children. Now the AWIC is the Indian section of the International Board for Books for Young People, (IBBY).

The AWIC opened a chain of libraries, in many parts of India, specially in slum areas and tribal belts. The world community lauded this effort and honoured the AWIC with the prestigious IBBY-Asahi Award.

AWIC's work runs parallel to the efforts of the National Book Trust. The NBT takes books to target audience, even those in remote areas, in mobile vans; holds exclusive

pustak melas (book fairs) from time to time; maintains a network of contact with schools; brings out a bi-lingual magazine (English and Hindi) which sets a high standard of production quality, yet is very reasonably prized. (There is need for bringing out the magazine on other Indian languages too). Thus a concerted bid has been made by NBT to encourage the book culture and reading.

Awards

Free India realized the need to honour writers and artists. The Sahitya Akademi and the State Academies were established with the objective of cross-language exchange of the best of books in the Indian languages and also to confer annual awards on the litterateurs.

Those who served the cause of children's literature were not left out. The NCERT, essentially concerned with developing educational books for the young, was entrusted the task of honouring Indians who made positive contribution to children's literature. The Awards are given to two authors/one illustrators from each language, (English is also one of the languages), every second year for published works or for manuscripts on a pre-defined topic. The NCERT Award is prestigious, on par with the Sahitya Akademi Awards for literature for adults. However, the clamour for presenting the awards every year and for enhancing the prize money has been sounded. This is one demand that needs to receive the attention of the authorities. Have we achieved enough?

Our achievements, in the field of children's literature, since independence, are considerable. But, have we achieved enough? No.

Even today, original books, good magazines for children are few and far between in most Indian languages. The exceptions are Malayalam, Bengali and Marathi. There are hardly 600 new titles for children published in India every year; and not more than 50 publishers who specialise in books for the young.

First impression, it is said, is the best impression. More so is this true in the case of books/magazines for the young.

Yet this is one area generally ignored. Except for the NBT in the governmental sector and a few private publishers like the CBT, Ratna Sagar, Vikas, Navneet and DC Books, the standard of production is nothing much to write home about. Most publishers use sub-standard paper. Illustrations, even when well-executed, suffer when transferred to poor-quality paper. The jackets are rarely ever strong and lasting.

The winds of change are visible. But they need to gain further momentum.

The AWIC, which is the Indian section of the International Board of Books (IBBY) organized the 26th IBBY Congress at New Delhi in September 1998. (The IBBY has 65 member nations and holds an international meet once every two years. Japan is the only other Asian nation that has held this Congress). The congresses are held, once every two years. The Congress has helped to remind the world community the richness of India's literary traditions of India and also to feel the vitality that pulsates through the field of children's literature in India.

Pointers to the Future

That shall depend on the goal the writers set today. The need is to clear the mind of the cobwebs of alien influence and to find strength from our roots, from our traditions and heritage. At the same time we have to realize the truth inlaid in the slogan, 'Unity in diversity.' In a multi-cultural, multi-lingual nation, the need for cross pollination cannot be minimized.

Years ago, Dr K M George an eminent octogenarian scholar put forth a plan for *Aadan-Pradan* (give and take) of literature between the language groups. The focus was on the need for all states to come together to encourage the development of a core group of translators who could take the best of every language to all other language groups. The idea is equally true of the field of children's literature.

Another area where children's literature lags behind relates to dramas, plays and theatre activities. That looks strange considering the fact that the Indian tradition is

rich and goes back to the days of the Sanskrit dramas of Kalidas and Bhana and a host of others.

Children's literature in India has to trade the roots and draw sustenance from the rich heritage. If the understanding of the distinct cultural backdrop of our nation is clear and strong, it will be easy to absorb the winds of change which waft in from beyond our shores. The influence of the West shall then be healthy, salubrious. And we will gain the strength to send out winds of change to make impact on the literature of other nations too.

At the same time, writers must keep the basic rule, set by E B White (Author of Three Little Pigs and many other classic tales) "Anyone who writes down to children is simply wasting his time. You have to write up, not down. Children are demanding. They are the most attentive, curious, eager, sensitive, quick and generally congenial readers on each. They accept, almost without question, anything you present them with, as long as it is presented honestly, fearlessly, and clearly. Some writers for children deliberately avoid using words they think a children doesn't know. This emasculates the prose, and, I suspect, bores the reader. Children are game for anything. They love words that give them a hard time, provided they are in the context that absorbs their attention."

So what are the pointers to the future? What lies in store for children's literature, which is riding the wings of change?

The changes we can anticipate are as under:

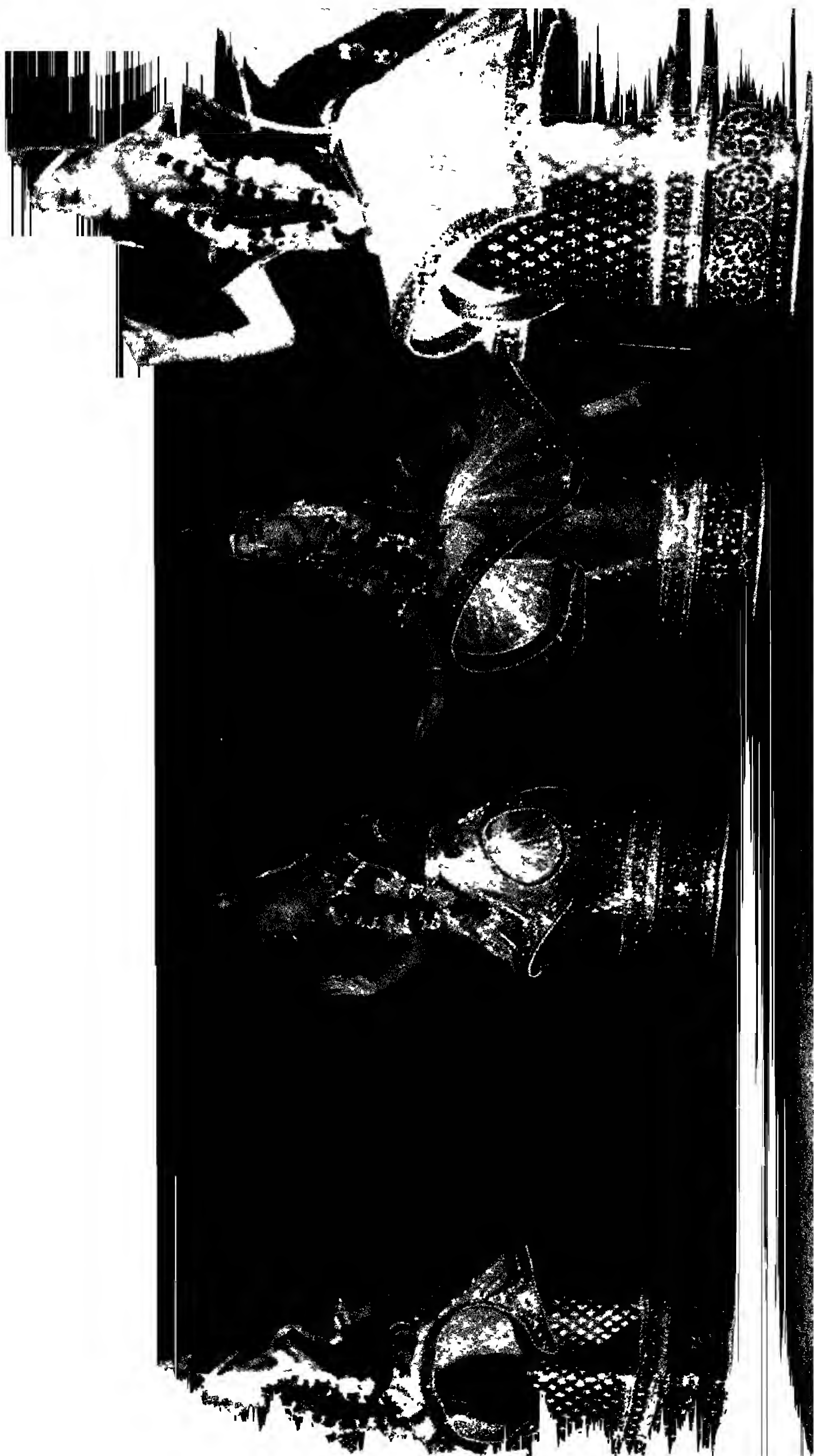
1. Children's literature is haking itself free from the mistaken notion that only inferior writers date this genre of creative work. This augurs well for the future.
2. The emergence of competent editors on the scene holds out hopes of qualitative improvement in the quality of books for children. They understand the need for realism. They know, as Russell Hoban pointed out, "Today's children do not live in an unexpurgated world. With their elders, they must endure sudden deaths and slow ones, bombs and fire falling from the sky, the poisoning of peaceful air to the threatening extinction

of this green jewel, Earth. They must endure the reality of mortal man.”

3. Modern techniques relating to lay out and reproduction of illustrations will be fully exploited by editors of good publishing houses to improve the overall appeal to the books.
4. The editors will encourage entry into the field of novices, with the necessary talent. This will have a tremendous impact on children's literature in the days to come.
5. The need to sustain the highest quality...whether it relates to the text or the illustration or the production or the sales...will be felt more as the challenge from other media, specially the TV, is bound to become sharper in the days to come. It is here that the audio, video cassettes for children, supported by books which are behind the cassettes, are likely to make a tremendous impact.
6. The golden age is round the corner for informative books, novels and short stories in which mystery, suspense, adventure or science dominates.□

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PERFORMING ARTS

Kapila Vatsyayan

In a civilization and culture and thus a country, where many moments of time and space co-exist, it is difficult to draw a pure linear graph in terms of progressive time in only historical terms. Fifty years ago when India attained political independence, no doubt it was a historical moment of the greatest significance, but it was neither a moment of complete break with the past in civilizational or cultural terms nor did it signify total transformation of a people who had been politically but not intellectually or emotionally uprooted from their regional and local identities. While the freedom movement and the struggle for independence articulated a national aspiration, all-India in character, under the surface was the phenomenon of a resilient socio-cultural fabric characterized by a staggering multiplicity of races, languages, dialects, textual and oral traditions, religion, societal structure and much else. All this multiplicity and diversity was held together in an orbit as single planets (units) are held together in a single astronomical galaxy of a shared world view and an unseen but clearly discernible integral vision and unifying system of values, conduct, expressions and communication.

The daily, monthly, annual calendar in all sections of society revolved around the waxing and waning moon for the most part, and the solar movement from Cancer to Capricorn. A predominantly agricultural society identified the potent moments of seeding, sowing and harvesting with the movement of moon, the sun and the stars. The

sky and the earth interconnected and men, women, society celebrated these in different ways and at different moments in different parts of India with a variety of ritual acts, and performances. At these moments, a communication was being established between the temporal and the spiritual, the physical and the non-physical. In the vast network of cohesive societies, at the pre-agricultural stage the hunters, the food gatherers, the cattle breeders also identified such specific perisations in the annual calendar. All these were recognized then as we recognize them today, as the many fairs and festivals of the Indian sub-continent. Ritual, personal or collective, domestic or public and mythical content was overlaid on daily functions: the modes of expression were the countless forms of music, dance, drama, narrative forms. We comprehend them today by the generic term, the performing arts of tribal and rural India. The performance was the last and final layer of a richly textured collective community ritual where function, art and ideation were all intrinsically interwoven. The rhythm and dynamics of these daily annual and occasional festivities and celebrations sustained an incredible continuity, despite political subjugation and total non-recognition by the State and political authority. These were participative activities with no external goal of presentation, performance of an audience apart.

At other of levels societal structure, villages and small towns, flourished, in small or greater measure, a group of professionals who may or may not have been part of a caste society: the *Bhavais* in Gujarat, the performers of *Bhand Pather*, the *Ramayana* or *Rama Lila* of Banaras and Chitrakoot, the *Krishna Lila* of Vrindavana, the enactors of *Teyyam* and *Teriyattam* in Kerala, the performers of *Chhau* in Mayurbhanj, Purulia and Seraikala, the *Wani Leeba* narrators of Manipur, the *Jatra* performers of Bengal, the monks of the *Sattarias* of Assam, the *Mach Nach* performance of Madhya Pradesh, the *Tamasha* and *Lavani* performers of Maharashtra and many many others. They were the mobiles of the Indian society, who moved

in time and space, and were the bridge makers between time, past and present, social levels, castes and creeds. Some flourished, others languished depending upon community or local or regional political support. These were the innumerable forms of traditional narrative and theatrical forms which gave a contemporary meaning to the age old myths, legends and heroic tales depending upon individual genius exposure or assimilation of new ideas. The pre-Independence story of these forms and genres is a complex illuminative history of the resilience and vibrancy of the Indian cultural ethos.

And yet elsewhere in the protected and not so cloistered atmosphere of the temple and the princely courts, flourished the sophisticated arts of solo music and dance. These were transmitted father to son, mother to daughter. All parts of India had their special *gharanas* and *sampradayas* of what we today call classical music and dance. The varied names of the musical *gharanas* of Hindustani Music and the regional schools of *Bharatnatyam*, *Kathakali*, *Kuchipudi*, *Orissi*, *Kathak* and *Manipuri* are all too well known. Amongst these, some flourished with local patronage, others languished and were even throttled, thanks to the social stigma attached to these arts and the performers.

Distinct from all these levels and groups was the minority elite brought up in the British system of education, and a reformist patriotic zeal who by and large were either unaware of or they outright rejected the forms and their value. Also, to them it appeared as if that the glorious period of Indian past and its continuity had all but vanished and what survived was for the best part decadent. Nevertheless, it was from this minority elite that the first voices arose for retrieval and re-assembly and recovery of the fragments inspired no doubt with a new sensibility of a nationalist fervour, a reformist zeal and social purpose.

A few decades before Independence, beginning with late nineteenth century to the thirties of the twentieth, there appeared pioneers of many movements in music, dance, theatre, who were to have a deep impact on the

developments in these arts over the last fifty years. Again the distinctive contribution of Vishnu Digamber and Bhatkhande, Venkatamukhi in the field of music, E Krishna Iyer, Rukmini Devi, Vallathol, Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar have been adequately delineated upon and need no repetition.

It is against this brief and rather simplified background that we can review the developments in the field of what we may only for facility term as the performing arts of tribal, rural, village, town and metropolitan India in sociological terms.

To return to our initial categories of these performances as manifested as part of function (hunting, food gathering, agriculture) and the concomitant arts of music, dance, martial skills, the event which became a catalyst of a new awareness of these arts, was the Republic Day Parade and its cultural section. A variegated experience of pulsating rhythm, vitality and supreme beauty was provided for those for whom the book of the hidden but very real layers of the Indian cultural phenomenon was closed. For the participants, this was a first life time experience of exposure of those others from different parts of India about whom they had partial or little knowledge. It triggered curiosity and a sense of new pride in the educated elite and ignited a sense of recognition of the participants. The blessing was not unmixed. Exposure meant assimilation and gradually some homogenization of musical modes and dance movements. More, the recognition also brought with it the realization that the performance, the art could be dissociated from the life-function, the societal structure, the seasonal, annual, daily ritual and function. It could be presented as an artistic performance per se. The positive and negative aspects can be witnessed today at the local, regional and national levels after five decades of exposure, performances, presentations and the understandable changes in socio-economic fabric and the dynamics of the political process which have touched every tribal cluster, village and community. Now we have genres of performing arts we call folk performing arts. These are performed

both by the specific socio-cultural groups, tribes and classes and by others in towns and cities as professional performance or worse, pure entertainment. The establishment of zonal cultural centres gave a fillip to these arts through a programme of inter-regional exchanges and travel abroad. However, the question remains whether partial or total uprooting of these arts from the life-function and socio-cultural fabric has not or will not impoverish them. The perennial rhythm of continuity and change was sustained by the fact that they were intrinsic to life-style, life-function and world-view. Dissociated from the latter, can these arts have the possibility of organic growth in the absence of fertile ground and constant manuring of life-experience? Today as we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century, the communities and the social fabric have or are undergoing a sea change due to developmental programmes and a system of education, which does not still recognise those activity as essential or integral. Consequently, how long and in what manner, the forms, themselves can be sustained? The appropriation and the replication of these forms by those outside the communities make them popular for a while but is no guarantee for their growth from the inside. It would be possible to enumerate at greater length with specific examples be it the dances of the Nagas, the Daglas, the Santhals, the Riangas, the Moplahs, or Bhangara, how some of these form have undergone a metamorphosis beyond recognition. Extensive and sometime indiscriminate exposure is not an unmixed blessing.

What is true of the music and dance of tribal/rural India is also true in a different manner of the vast variety of theatrical forms mentioned earlier in this essay. In pre-Independent India there was a varying degree of knowledge and interest in these forms. The pioneers of the modern Indian theatre relied first heavily on European and British theatre, Parsi and Urdu theatre. Only a few amongst them specially from Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra were open to the richness of the traditional theatre such as *Jatra*. Also, as has been pointed out, some

of these forms were indeed languishing for want of support and recognition. The most important and significant development in the last four decades has been the recognition of these forms as a vast and rich reservoir for modern theatre. Once the shackles of the proscenium stage were broken and the unities of time and place of realistic theatre rejected, here was the vast open spaces of this mobile theatre with its vitality and its open flexible structure and its multi-media techniques of the spoken word, song, music, and kinetics. The contemporary dramatist and the modern theatre director of urban India has drunk fast and sometimes deep at the well springs of these genres. *Teyyam*, *Teriyattam*, *Kuttiyattam*, *Teerokutho*, *Yakshagana*, *Prahlad Natakam*, *Bhava*, *Tamasha*, *Bhand Pather*, *Mach Nach*, *Meitei* theatre and many others have been employed fully, partially, faithfully or with modifications—sometimes distortions beyond recognition. Here while the forms are traditional, the sensibility is new and modern. Some critics have opined that this interest in the traditional forms were triggered by the interest by modern European and post modern theatre in Asian forms. The case of Brecht is often quoted. Also the interest by Indians in the works of Ionesco and others is referred to. Whatever the reasons, whether as detour journey or an inward gaze, the prolific vibrancy and creativity of contemporary Indian theatre and its nationally and internationally acclaimed dramatist and theatre director is, in no small measure, the gift of the traditional Indian theatre forms to modern India. As in the case of folk music and dance, the flip side of the coin is what has happened to these forms in their original environs of village and small town and their performers. While their forms have been appropriated, the performers (with notable exceptions of recognition as state or national awards) have either languished or their performance is effected by the avalanche of the canned and contrived performance of the commercial cinema and TV. This is a real paradox and dilemma. What ground level springs hidden under sand dunes, snowscapes, and hills, village

wells remain after the original has been famished or swallowed and the tertiary has outlived its time span of growth and decline. Patronage and sustenance has come from the national and state akademies to some of these forms, some have revived e.g. *Kuttiyattam*, *Mayurbhanj Chhau* and *Yakshagana*; the fate of some others is uncertain. The dynamics is parallel to some trends in the sphere of the visual arts of painting and sculpture. This is not the occasion to dwell upon the parallel movements in the performing and the visual arts.

The annual performance of *Ramalila*, *Krishna Lila* etc. have continued but with a marked difference. No longer is a whole town and people participating. It is a sponsored happening in some places. Also TV serials have overtaken the narration, dramatization of the great epics. The process of constant flow and change was the secret of their survival. Making them as fixed categories with single perspectives on the big and small screen is cutting at the very roots of the characteristic phenomenon of a unified vision integrity along with constant possibility of change, innovation and multiplicity of interpretation. No longer will a new generation distinguish between a Valmiki, Tulsidasa, Kamban and another four hundred *Ramayanas*, it will be single version of the TV serial. Pity, not just pity, almost a tragedy. A holistic world view with a potential for polyvalent form and meaning is gradually becoming unidimensional. Nevertheless, perhaps both from the regions as also the creativity of the individual dramatists and theatre directors, a new life-line will be established with the essence of the Indian tradition but with a new language of global communication.

The situation in the sphere of what are termed as the diverse schools of classical music and dance was distinctively different although not in relation to what has been described in respect of tribal and folk music and dance and traditional theatre forms. Two or three decades in dance and five, six decades in music, prior to political independence as has been mentioned earlier in the essay, some pioneers had attempted to take the assiduously

guarded traditions of music and dance to larger audiences. We have already referred to the contributions of Vishnu Digambar and Bhatkhande in music, Vallathol, Rukmini Devi, Rabindranath Tagore and Udaya Shankara in dance.

In the late forties, there existed many family traditions (*gharanas, sampradayas*) in classical music of the North and South recognized by the generic term Hindustani music and Karnatic music. The transmission from master to pupil was fostered by individual patrons of the princely states or otherwise. There were the special schools of Delhi, Banaras, Gwalior, Maihar, Devas and others. Great musicians practised and presented their art to restricted initiated audience who responded to the finer technical nuances of pitch, tone, melody and rhythm. Some all Indian forums provided an opportunity for these musicians to present their creativity before larger audiences. An all India circuit was discernible through the annual musical events held in Jalandhar (in the North) Calcutta in the East, Bombay and Pune in the West, Madras and Tiruvalur in the South. There were others. Alongside were a few institutions where some of these musicians began to teach students who did not belong to the family lineage. These efforts threw the doors open to the urban middle class in a new institutional framework. The establishment of schools of music by private efforts as also state support was by and large a new phenomenon. Also, the organs of mass media, chiefly Radio in the first decade and TV in the second decade played a significant role in a wider dissemination of these arts. The parallel developments of institutionalisation, of state support and opportunities to travel abroad resulted in a significant proliferation of the traditional styles of classical Hindustani and Karnatic music. There was also a movement of Indians settling abroad, principally in the USA, Canada and the UK. Some amongst the great masters of these classical styles settled abroad. Their students were both Indian and foreign. It was natural that the traditional schools should find a home with a different type of lineage of disciplines and pupils in these countries.

Thus we have a Maihar School (*gharana*) of Ali Akbar a *Kirana* school established by the late Pandit Prannath in California. Many Americans, Canadians, Britishers and the French have sat at the feet of these masters and have distinguished themselves as accomplished artists of these traditional forms. All these developments are the gift of political freedom and a new attitude towards these arts by the teacher and the taught.

At home, opportunities for receiving training and presenting concerts have increased a thousand fold. No longer are concerts restricted to the seclusion of a few homes or a few annual concerts. Renowned and successful artists are much in demand. They have a heavy schedule of touring and presentation of concerts to large audiences. Halls are full and the clientele is varied. The recognition through a variety of awards, the enhancement of opportunity not unmixed with monetary returns have understandably put some strain on the inner dynamics of these schools and styles. The subtler, finer, nuances of an inward looking musical system, which demands creation and innovation at the very moment of performance, is now subject to an outward demand of immediate effectiveness and applause from not so discerning an audience. The first phase of the music called *alapa* or *alapana* which has no verbal or rhythmic content has had to be necessarily shortened, the concentration is on the second rhythmic section where virtuosity and not introvert exploration of the note or cluster of notes is at a premium. The older generation bemoans the loss of depth; the younger generation welcomes the changes. It remains to be seen whether these highly sophisticated and stylized schools will survive and transcend the challenges of popularity and wider dissemination. These schools and styles co-exist with multiplicity of other new genres of music. Indian pop film music and a host of others including diffusion music is the measure of the inner resilience of these arts to sustain continuity with change. Indian classical music in all its styles is indicative of a typical Indian phenomenon of the flow of an unbroken tradition. The river changes

course but does not change its basic nature and personality. Nevertheless, classical Indian music, both Hindustani and Karnatic had distinguished itself as a strong and vibrating movement. There continues to be a still centre—an immutable kernel which is undisturbed and has the potency for renewal and growth.

The varied schools of Indian dance all today called as the classical forms have a slightly different history. Unlike music where there was an unbroken tradition, in dance although there were some unbroken traditions in the ambiance of the temples, the perception of the educated urban and intellectually aware was that these had been nearly lost or forgotten. In the early decades of the century, temple dancing had been banned and a social stigma was attached to these arts. The tradition of teaching was sustained by a few families most notable being that of the Vinadhanam and her granddaughter, the famed Balasaraswati. However, for the most part there was neither state patronage or social status. A few courts in north and central India patronised dance styles, we know by the name of *Kathak*. The efforts of the pioneers—Vallathol in respect of *Kathakali* and Rukmini Devi in respect of *Bharatnatyam*—was to reassemble and reconstruct the fragments into a new whole. This was a renewal and rejuvenation but not the unbroken continuity. What happened in *Bharatanatyam* and *Kathakali* in the thirties and forties was repeated in the case of *Odissi*—the style from Orissa in the fifties. A new eclecticism brought forth a style which was hailed as *Odissi*. In the case of *Manipuri*, the style from the far-east, it was a case of reformating the existing genres in response to a new social cultural environment. In *Kathak*, it was the journey first from temple to court and from court to the new ambiance of the cities and towns. Great masters like Acchan Maharaj played a seminal role. Within a few decades other neo-classical styles sprung up, *Kuchipudi* and *Mohiniattam*. All these, principally *Bharatanatyam*, *Kathakali*, *Kathak*, *Manipuri*, *Kuchipudi*, and *Mohiniattam*—have today established their identity as distinctive forms as

stage arts. Other dance forms like the *Sattriya* from Assam, *Chhau* from the East are striving for recognition as classical forms. While the history of the evolution of these neo-classical dance schools and forms is different from classical music, each of these forms in varying degrees share the dynamics of institutionalization in training and dissemination and presentation with classical music. The *gurus*, masters of these forms are by and large members of the faculty of specific schools and academies, financially supported by the state or private effort. In the fifties, there were only half a dozen such schools. Also, there was a reluctance on the part of the urban middle class to receive training in these arts. The stigma has not only disappeared, training in these arts has become a necessary accomplishment at some levels of the Indian society. In the fifties, few men and fewer women would have taken up these arts as full time careers as performers or teachers. Today the scene is radically different. There are dance schools in every big and small cities; hundreds are trained. Performances are frequent and opportunities for presentation many. Schemes for scholarships and fellowships launched by the national and regional (State) governments and the akademies has facilitated training. Some amongst those who have been recipient of these scholarships and fellowships have attained great heights of individual excellence. A significant number of the individual dancers have featured in major national and international festivals and forums. They, like the musicians, have brought distinctions and recognition to their art and to the country.

Welcome as these trends are, the challenges faced by the artists and their art are not minimal. As in the case of music, but even more so, these highly stylized and socio-culturally specific arts with a rich and complex context of myth and legend, poetry and literature in Sanskrit and other Indian languages accompanied by a chiselled musical score and intricate rhythmic system was an art of long and arduous training presented for initiated audiences. Creativity lay in the potential for improvising

variations on a single theme, line, melody and rhythmic pattern. The demands of the audience, connoisseur were as much aesthetic relish lay in exploring the unknown in the seemingly familiar and known. Subtlety and intimacy of micro movements was the essence, be it the eye movements of *Kathakali*, the restrained *abhinaya* of *Bharatanatyam*, the delicate and hardly perceptible eyebrows movements of *Kathak* or the finger movements of *Manipuri*. The art was presented before small audiences against a single source of light as in *Kathakali* or neutral illumination. With the shifting of venue from temple court, courtyard and chambers to large proscenium stage, an audience in darkness and lighting system of footlights and skylights, the dancer is called upon to adopt another mode of communication. Large movements, dramatic statuesque poses, pauses and quick rhythmic virtuosity between the dancer and the percussionist draw immediate applause. The improvisations have to be explicit and dramatic: the interpretative sections performed to a line of poetry became dramatic rather than subtle variations of kinetic imagery to match the poetic line. Besides, in a style such as *Kathakali* where the narrative took hours to unfold and develop, the dancers took their time and the spectators persevered with expectant patience, the shortening of duration of these performance to a span of an hour or more has brought about many significant changes, some not so good. The rather set repertoire of some of the other schools, principally *Bharatanatyam* proved to be a constraint for some dancers. While a few enlarged it by taking up new themes and adopting contemporary poetry for their performances, a few have altogether discarded the verbal content and have explored fully the potential of the chiselled kinetic techniques of the style. While adhering to the basic fundamentals of the technique in respect of movements, there has been a distinctive departure from the conventional format. Some outstanding dancers have not shied away from incorporating the body-language of the martial dancers or yogic exercises. This is true experimentation within the tradition and not against

it or a total breakaway from the tradition. The essentials of form are old, the sensibility new and modern. This is most evident in *Bharatanatyam* and to a certain extent in the case of *Odissi*. These creative experiments have been hailed as great masterpieces of modern dance, in fact they reflect a normal process within the Indian arts where transformation and mutation takes place from within with a rejection of some elements but not all. Consequently, both continuity and change is possible. Of course, there are a few who have persevered with the pristine austerity of the earlier trends despite odds. Some amongst the classical dancers like the Indian musician have established schools abroad. There is a *Bharatnatyam* school of Balasaraswati in the USA, a *Pandanallur* school in Canada. The contribution of the Indian diaspora as also the dedicated foreigners is not minimal. Indeed, in most cases a seriousness of purpose is quite evident.

Understandably the solo-arts could not remain solo. The classical dancer no longer performs only as a soloist. There are group dancers in many. The particular numbers are broken up to be executed sequentially or concurrently by a number of dancers. This is not akin to the soloist and the *corps de ballet* of classical ballet. It is a case of phrase or section designed for the soloist being executed by a number of dancers as a choreographic design. Experiments such as these have a novelty sometimes short-lived at other times more enduring. This has happened in practically all the forms, *Bharatanatyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Kathak* and *Odissi* but not in *Kathakali* and *Manipuri*.

Besides this type of innovation, there is the marked phenomenon of composing dance-dramas in the classical styles. Rukmini Devi was the first to attempt these in her dance dramas of *Kumarasambhavam* and later *Ramayana*. Mrinalini followed in close proximity. Between the fifties and nineties, many dancers have become choreographers and directors. There is a fairly vast spectrum of these choreographic efforts. Practically all the major dancers of these styles either directly or with the help of the traditional teachers have become choreographers of

dance-dramas in the neo-classical styles. The phenomenon can be witnessed in *Bharatanatyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Kathak* and *Manipuri*. The composers are great traditional masters, Kitappa Satyam, Birju Maharaj, Babu Singh and a notable second generation. The development of a genre of dance-drama in classical style is concurrent and simultaneous with that other phenomenon, where some dancers either as inheritors of the famed Uday Shankar or otherwise who followed in his wake are creators of dance-dramas in an individual style. These choreographers were the protagonists of the contemporary modern dance style, eclectic and individual in character. In the first decade, these were largely the students and close associates of Uday Shankar. Now there are many more. There is a new young generation of dancer-choreographers who have evolved distinctive styles not necessarily based on any Indian classical or folk form. Some have relied on a body language with a vocabulary of movements akin to the modern dance of the USA, others have drawn inspiration from other sources including the Indonesian and Japanese dance forms. A select number have experimented with puppetry and mask. Indeed, the thin dividing line between and amongst some genres of the performing arts are disappearing. It remains to be seen how far and how long these trends will be sustained in a fast changing world, especially when the dancer's performance enters the big or small screen and his or her art is employed in new multimedia technologies.

In addition, distressingly is a new kitsch of classical and folk dances not merely popular but distastefully unrestrained and unaesthetic. It is seen less on stage and more on the screen. This is an instance of trivialization of a great tradition, if not dissolution and disfigurement of the body sacred and beautiful.

But this is the Indian tradition with its multiple streams levels and flavours and fragrance, each distinct and yet constantly in flux. Coexistence of many moments of time and space, genres and forms is richly textured, not necessarily each part and section being coherently related

to the other. The unifying vision which held the multiplicity together, the holistic world view is indeed under great strain. At times, it appears that there is evidence of fragmentation with only centrifugal forces at work. There are illumined pieces flying out in different directions. At other times, there is a real danger of homogenization where distinctive identities so characteristic of India will or are getting obliterated: instead, there is a faceless or spineless uprootedness with an all India veneer.

But there is no cause for pessimism and despair despite the many avalanches of crass-commercialization of an art which could and must live only with the austere discipline of the soul, mind and body. Perhaps through the experience of prolificness, external recognition and jostling with others nationally and internationally, another genetic variety of seeds will be or is being sown. Entropy of one kind will lead to creativity of another. The period of over-exposure over, there is bound to be an urge to turn inwards and homewards, for music and dance is when the musician and the dancer are not. There is still pulsating life and inborn and ingrained one pointed attention and concentration to which, a few amongst these many, are surrendering to. Therein lies the hope of the future to recover the essential pristine quality of these arts which can and will no doubt elevate and liberate. □

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FIFTY YEARS OF INDIAN CINEMA

Gautam Kaul

The dawn of August 15, 1947, was very special for the people of India, but the day itself went along differently in different places. Calcutta was largely curfew-bound, having suffered communal clashes in the same week. In Bombay, the streets were decorated and public meetings had been arranged. In the film industry, there was also great rejoicing and artistes who had worked on studio floors for many years were particularly happy. Some of them were, however, also talking of the arrivals of their relatives from upcountry working in the studios of Lahore. B R Chopra was one of them

A day earlier, however, there was big alarm in the government because it was discovered that there was no government agency to record India's tryst with destiny. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946, being angry at the role played by the Information Films of India, an agency created for the promotion of official propaganda, had ordered the closure of the department and now the installation of a popular Government seemed doomed to go unrecorded. Vallabhbhai Patel appealed to the leaders of the Indian film industry in Bombay for help, and the Indian Motion Pictures Producers' Association agreed to lend its professional services.

A team of cameramen headed by J B H Wadia was airlifted from Bombay to New Delhi, while a second unit moved into the streets of Bombay to record the events of the day. It is thus that the first day of freedom came to be recorded on film for future generations. The film *Azadi Ka*

Utsav was later released as a feature documentary and a much chastened new national government ordered the creation of an official machinery for publicity. The Films Division of the Government of India was thus born in 1948.

The year 1947 saw a record production of films. Merchants and contractors, fattened by profits made from wartime contracts, were using their money to finance a whole lot of new films. These persons had no sense of cinema and anyone with a film script in hand was grabbed to join a film production team. The year was particularly short on big productions with *Shehnai* and *Jugnu* being among the few successful films. A number of films were launched on the freedom theme but few could become a reality. Among them were such inconsequential films as *Chhin Le Azadi*, *Samaj Ko Badal Dalo* and *Utho Jago*. In South India, the great hit was *Naam Iruwar* (We Two) which had a string of songs written by Subhramania Bharati. Interestingly, it was a year in which Nargis, as a young star launched her own film company and made *Romeo Juliet* with herself in the lead role.

The disruption of film production in Lahore and Karachi had an echo in distant Calcutta where refugees and communal riots brought the film industry in east India to a grinding halt. A large number of people decided to shift from Calcutta. Bombay was awash with young talent but at the same time there was confusion because some of the established banners like A R Kardar had decided to move across the border, taking all their film material with them.

There was the hope that the popular Government would do something for the film industry but the timing was wrong and Nehru rejected the demand of the film industry, calling its leaders 'unrealistic and selfish'. But it seems those who were trying to seek relief were out of touch with reality as the popular demand was against the obscene trends in film-making. The demand was to cleanse the Indian cinema of unhealthy practices and make better films, keeping in view the new reality. Indian cinema had promoted great licence in sensual portrayal of characters and scantily dressed women. Kissing in films was common.

In the next 50 years Indian cinema was to experience many ups and downs. The amendment to the Cinematography Act in 1952 came as a shock as it illustrated the anxiety of the state to put the entertainment business under its direct control. A new censor code was evolved, introducing the 'universal' and 'adult' categories of film classification, restricting the entry of children in matinee shows and ordering cinema operators to compulsorily show the weekly newsreels being produced by the Film Division. The release of raw film stock and the length of films were restricted. Clauses were added not only to make film production safer in studios, but also the screening of films in cinema halls.

These restrictions brought about a change in the working of the film industry. Little credit is given to the state intervention but if there were other favourable conditions, the new policy contributed to the coming of the golden age of Indian cinema. This period began in 1952 and extended upto 1968.

Indian cinema stepped out of its national borders in 1952 when Mehboob Khan released *Aan*, the first film in techni-colour which drew attention not only within the country but also became the flagship of Indian cinema in the Middle-East, North Africa and Europe. *Aan* was followed by Raj Kapoor's *Aawara* whose phenomenal run in the socialist countries of Central Europe, and in the then USSR and later in the Far East for the first time introduced Indian cinema to an audience which had not even heard of this great film-making industry. In 1955, the hat-trick was completed by *Pather Panchali* made by Satyajit Ray, whose own journeys introduced Indian cinema to the American continent.

Having established a name worldwide, Indian business found it easy to open new markets for the distribution of Indian films. Particularly the enterprise of the Gujarati community to push Indian cinema to the African continent was a laudable effort because it was now encroaching on the established markets of British and Hollywood films. The dance and song routine which characterised Indian

films was closer to the cultural ethos of the African population.

New cinema centres mushroomed in the middle of tropical jungles to show the action films which India was now exporting. The scene was the same in the Middle-East where Beirut became the centre for trade in Indian films. Merchants from Egypt, Turkey and many countries of the Middle-East including Iran converged on Beirut to buy Indian films in Arabic sound track and then redistribute them in their own territories. A secondary market was also opened in Teheran but the overthrow of the Shah closed the flourishing market in Indian films in this area for the time being. Finally the Civil War in which Beirut suffered immense damage, shifted the focus of the business in Indian films to Cairo and Dubai.

The golden era of Indian cinema also saw the release of evergreen films from the stables of Raj Kapoor, Nav Ketan, B R Chopra, Guru Dutt, V Shantaram, AVM, Gemini, Vauhini and R D Bansal. There were occasional, extraordinary film works by enterprising individuals like K. Asif which caught the nation's attention. It is not only *Mughal-e-Azam* and its phenomenal run all over the country in its Hindi and Tamil versions, but also a large number of films from the regional cinema which became popular.

Tamil and Bengali films were now entering the international market. Tamil cinema extended its area of influence to the whole of the South Asian region where people of Tamil-India origin had permanently settled and acquired their own local nationality. Tamil cinema dominated Sri Lanka to such an extent that it created popular resistance as this was at the cost of the Sinhala culture, and in the early 60s, Tamil films were banned.

The golden era of Indian films saw the rise of individual film artistes. Among them were Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand, Shivaji Ganesan, Gemini Ganesan, Raaj Kumar (Kannada), Prem Nazir, Uttam Kumar and others. There were female artists like Nutan, Waheeda Rehman,

Vaijayanthimala, Suchitra Sen, Sheela (Kerala), Saroja Devi, Padmini, Bhanumati, Jamuna, Sulochana and others.

Indian cinema after 1950 once again picked up the trend of tackling social issues and showed concern for educating its audiences in culture oriented subjects. Much original thinking marked this period. The regional cinema took up themes from well-known writings not only of their own regional literature, but also from literary works in other Indian languages. Cinema was equally innovative with songless films and even single character film (*Yaadein*) being attempted and there was popular as well as state recognition for meritorious work.

The Times of India group of newspapers established in 1952 a new award for meritorious works in Indian cinema called the 'Clare' award in memory of their oldest film critic, Miss Clare Mendonsa. It was later renamed the Filmfare Award. By the mid-1960s and the better part of the 70s the Filmfare Award became the hallmark of quality in Indian cinema. Among the VIPs who turned up to give away the awards was President Nasser of Egypt in 1958.

The Government of India also instituted its state awards in 1952 and the first film to be given the Best Film of the Year award was *Amchi Ai*. The state awards had one distinction over the popular awards in that the state awards took into consideration all films made in India, while the Filmfare Award was restricted to Hindi films. Later it was extended to South Indian films in their regional languages. But the popular film awards came to be challenged with the institution of more awards by private social organisations. The awards instituted by the Government of India came to add prestige and recognition. They also encouraged the founding of regional language awards by the state governments. The total impact of all these awards was to add respectability to film-making.

When cinema was introduced in India, the reputation of women associated with films was not particularly high in social circles. But when Durga Khote, a high caste educated woman, stepped into this profession, some respectability was established for women artistes. Still,

women in films continued to be looked down upon even if individual heroines commanded all-India popularity. Public and State recognition for merit in cinema changed public opinion about their reputation. Today this recognition has reached the point where film personalities are contesting elections and becoming members of Parliament and state legislative assemblies. The phenomenon of the influence of Tamil cinema on politics is now a topic of serious research of American scholars who do not find the example of Ronald Reagan good enough to substantiate that Hollywood also influences American politics. They see in the Tamil example the development of cinema as an institutional instrument of popular politics.

The first two decades after Independence also saw a major change in film music. It was 'Radio Ceylon' which contributed immensely to the popularity of film music all over India with the Indian broadcasting network was playing coy to the new trends. A stage came when All India Radio had to start its own popular music channel, *Vividh Bharti* from Bombay. While the team of Shanker Jaikishan followed by Laxmikant Pyare Lal dominated Indian film music, music composers like Madan Mohan, Roshan and O P Nayyar created their own niche. Their music was often copied in regional films.

It was in 1968 that Indian cinema accepted a tall thin person from Calcutta's business world who was keen to work in films. He was not noticed in *Saat Hindustani* and was not much noticed in *Reshma Aur Shera*. In the latter film he was mainly missed out for attention because Sunil Dutt had knocked out more than 50 per cent of his role on the editing table, fearing dominance over his own character.

He was Amitabh Bachchan, who was later to be dubbed as a one-man industry. But by 1972, it was the reigning phenomenon Rajesh Khanna on whom most of the successful films of Bombay rested; Raj Kapoor was also regularly bringing out his films and in this period *Sangam*, *Mera Naam Joker* and *Bobby* remained the most

prominent works of Raj Kapoor. *Sangam* was particularly important because it was the first major film where the whole film unit went to Europe and England for shooting. Our attention, however, gets diverted back to Amitabh Bachchan who by 1975 had arrived with *Zanzeer* and followed it up with *Sholay*.

The decade of the 1970s saw the arrival of directors of the artistic cinema—Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Basu Chatterjee, if he could be accepted in this category. Established film-makers like Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Tapan Sinha and AVM provided enough respectable fare to their audience but there were aberrations when Indian cinema caught the headlines for other reasons. The disappearance of everything connected with *Kissa Kursi Ka* and the legal battle of K A Abbas for his feature documentary *A Tale of Four Cities* remind us that the road to film-making in India always had its pitfalls. The entry of violence as a dominating content in Indian films, particularly as a post-Emergency trend, brought Indian films to disrepute and in 1982 when colour TV was introduced on a mass scale during the 9th Asian Games, it posed the first serious challenge to the future of Indian cinema.

The mainstream cinema also saw the emergence of artistic films promoted by institutional financing specifically by the Film Finance Corporation. Beginning with *Bhuvan Shome*, directed by Mrinal Sen, a number of films were made by former students of the Film and TV Institute of India, Pune. Artistes like Jaya Bhaduri, Shabana Azmi, Shatrughan Sinha, Anil Dhawan became prominent products of this Institute. South Indian cinema particularly benefited with the emergence of a host of young film-makers with the establishment of this centre of film learning.

The last decade has seen the fading away of the old film luminaries and the rise of a new breed of film artistes who are brash, beautiful and bold, some are extremely talented. There are others like Shah Rukh Khan, who are not worried about their image and have associated themselves

with some landmark films, better known for their odd themes. The image of the hero in fact took a big beating because of films like *Darr* and *Baazigar* which portrayed the villain in the mould of a hero of the story. The vamp also lost her position in films as leading actresses started playing the 'bad woman'

In sheer volume, Indian cinema remains a very prominent opinion maker in the country. It has influenced fashion, it remains a store house for research scholars to reference the changing public tastes and social thinking in each of the past five decades. It has been recorder of its time and it has also been the greatest entertainer of its people. Indian cinema has at the same time gone through changes. These changes are so sweeping that each aspect of its creativity demands a separate school of writers for comment. At the present movement, we can only make some passing references at the changing trends.

India was receiving mass education of its past history, tradition and modern Indian literature through cinema in the early years after Independence. Some of the finest writers of the day were associated in writing the screen plays and stories and Directors also picked up novels, which had already received public recognition to be turned into films.

Novelists more or less disappeared as writers for film stories by 1965 and were replaced by a monstrosity called the 'story department'. The result was that writing for cinema became a specialized activity of a few persons who in their leisure time were flocking to the various movie theatres in the town to see foreign films to pick up ideas from them. The mainstream cinema became an institutional imitator of film industries of western countries. The works of writers of repute can now be only seen in regional cinema, but even here the reputed writer is in minority.

Related to the story writer was the film journalist. If there has been the least change in the past 50 years, it is so in the profession of the film journalists, if not film journalism. The journalist was never well paid but in the

first half of the period under review, he had acquired a place of eminence because publishers in particular of magazines were providing enough space for his writings to appear. Urban audiences were taking seriously their advice on which film to see. As the power of film critic grew, mainstream cinema attempted to corrupt them with various offers and temptations. Some fell in the trap, while other writers decided to shift away from this profession to take other areas of journalism. Film magazines in the country showed prolific increase in their number and today there are more than 870 publications devoted exclusively to cinema. Fifty years ago, people were interested in knowing the progress of films under production. Today the reader of a magazine is keen only on the persons acting in the films and their personal and social lives. Cinema has lost its charm as news otherwise. Readers are also very insular and are less keen to know the cinema of the world. When they are interested in an International Film Festival, they are totally in the dark to select their personal film programmes. Film magazines in India fifty years ago were circulated only within the country, but today they have a world-wide reach and can be picked up at news stands in other countries.

In the past fifty years, the Government has also taken interest in the working of the film industry realising that the ordinary film makers were only keen on the business of film making and less inclined to show any interest in their social responsibilities. Besides constituting the S K Patil Film Enquiry Committee in 1949, the Government also successfully guided the film industry to bring about schemes which looked after the less fortunate amongst the cinema professionals. The 'Old Artists Relief Fund' was created, a labour law was legislated to bring about some rationality in the working wages. The export of film was regulated and piracy of film prints was recognized as a problem in which the Government needed to intervene. A working group on films was established, but its recommendations could not be implemented because the Government was not keen on any radical measures. Each

decade saw some state interventions, whether it was for a region or for the whole country. Occasionally, there was voices raised to nationalize the film industry, but no notice was taken of such demands. The playing field was kept open for the various film artists. When there was a better appreciation of the working of the film industry by the Central Government, most of the State administrations kept the functioning of the film industry at par with gambling and prostitution. Except perhaps the State governments of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Bengal, other State Governments at their level did not provide for much relief to the workers and local audiences. Indian cinema thus continued to wage a low intensity warfare with its own administration and continues to do so. In the meantime technology brought in new forms of entertainment and cinema finally faced a new challenge when TV and its colour format emerged. TV finally began to hurt Indian cinema and film exhibitors began to sell cinema halls to convert them into shopping arcades. At the same time when there was a stagnating picture in the availability of cinema halls in the country, the Indian film industry broke all previous records in 1993 by making 812 films in one year.

One of the most innovative things of Indian cinema has been its great passion for adopting technology. The Indian film makers may not have contributed anything materially in the original design or fabrication of sophisticated cinematic equipment, but as soon as it appeared in the market, the latest technology has been grabbed. We seem to be only six months behind in all development of cinema in the world. But Indian cinema is now available in most parts of the world except perhaps in the South-American continent, where it has only small foot-hold in the tropical countries.

As we look back fifty years of post-independent era, we feel reassured that the next fifty years of Indian cinema will see this classical format live on and not only entertain but guide the masses in what is good entertainment for them. □

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NEW WAVE CINEMA

Deepankar Mukhopadhyay

The sixties was a watershed period in our socio-cultural history. It was the second decade after Independence, and there was considerable turbulence as adolescence made room for youth. The decade saw two border clashes in 1962 and '65 (one of them escalating into a full-fledged war), sudden death of two Prime Ministers in 1964 and '66, a massive electoral upheaval dethroning the Congress Party in a number of states in 1967, followed by an armed uprising of peasants graduating into an urban guerrilla student movement. No other decade has been so exciting. The unusual course of events affected not only our society, but also the cultural milieu. Literature became more realistic and lifelike with most of the writers probing into the man-woman relationship; while Ravi Shankar reacted with the Beatles, it was Westword Ho for the tradition-bound Indian classical music; in theatre, there was experimentations with absurd drama and other new forms. But it was Indian Cinema which underwent the most radical, almost revolutionary changes. Right from its inception in 1913, Indian cinema had a populist base containing mythologicals, syrupy romantic stories with a generous amount of violence and thrill. Combined with a galaxy of handsome men and pretty women and popular songs and dances, this was the time-tested magic formula that had sustained the film industry for all these decades. The first protest came from Satyajit Ray who, in his very

first film *Pather Panchali* (1955) challenged all these commercial formulae.

Pather Panchali was, till that date, the most anti-establishment film as in one stroke it destroyed all the myths and taboos that had dominated the film industry so long. The film had no pretty heroine or tough villain, there was no commercially saleable star in it, the bulk of the film was shot outside the studio in location, there was no song recorded for the movie, the film had dealt with stern reality and lastly it received government finance. Over the next few decades, all these became the basic tenets of what came to be known as New Wave Cinema or Parallel Cinema movement. That was the uniqueness of *Pather Panchali*—it was not only a major human document, but it also inspired a whole movement fourteen years later when Mrinal Sen, one of Ray's contemporaries, came up with *Bhuvan Shome* (1969). *Pather Panchali* was the attempt of the solitary swallow to usher in the summer. *Bhuvan Shome* actually brought the summer as Sen and his fellow travellers, with great enthusiasm, changed the copybook. They were always conscious of the contemporary reality, picked up their themes from modern Indian literature and had a better understanding of the film medium because of their exposure to the world cinema through international film festivals and film society movements. They could break away from the prevailing studio system because of a new crop of artists and technicians coming out of the Pune Film Institute. They were also fortunate to get the full backing of a liberal Film Finance Corporation, which provided the financial support with no strings attached. The combination of all those factors saw the New Cinema Movement flourish and dominate the scene for the next fifteen years.

Chekov once commented that all modern Russian writers were born out of 'The Overcoat', referring to the famous short story by Nikolai Gogol. Similarly, we can say that all the New Wave film-makers had come out of *Pather Panchali*. But inspite of being a steady beacon of

inspiration to his contemporaries and successors, Satyajit Ray was never involved in the Movement, nor was he convinced of its viability. It could be Ray's aloof, introvert nature which made him keep a distance from other practitioners of the craft—many younger Bengali directors privately nourish a grievance that they never got any guidance from the maestro; he was too absorbed in his multi-faceted activities to help another person to grow. At the beginning of the New Cinema Movement, he wrote, an article, 'An Indian New Wave?' (1971) where he expressed his doubts about the survival power of the movement. He was also clearly unhappy about the new school's penchant for improvisation and considered it as an indication of poor craftsmanship. In a subsequent review 'Four And a Quarter'(1974), he passed some uncharitable comments on the maiden films of Kumar Shahni and Mani Kaul, the two early stars of the Movement.¹ Over the next two decades, the movement had its ups and downs, but Ray never changed his stand till the end. A few months before his death, one of his personal letters to a 'friend' somehow got leaked to the press.² In it, he openly criticised the New Wave directors for shoddy film-making and alleged that they made films keeping an eye on the international film festival circuit. These allegations deserve an in-depth study, which will be attempted later, but the fact remains that Ray remained a reluctant messiah to a generation that adored him.

Ray's relationship with the New Wave Film-makers is a complex and mysterious one. He was the man who revolutionized Indian Cinema, both in form and content, and every film-maker after him followed his example. Poverty, exploitation, man's noble struggle against all odds, superstitions, urban alienation—all these themes he handled superbly during the very first decade of his film-career. Much later all these themes were picked up and tried during the New Wave movement, with mixed results. Yet, Ray remained distant and aloof towards the Movement. It is significant that during the mid-seventies

to the early eighties, when the movement was at its peak, Ray only made films on fantasy and juvenile detective stories, except a trip down memory lane in *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*. Very deliberately he avoided the contemporary reality, which was the nucleus of the New Indian Cinema. Only once, during this time he picked up a typical New Wave theme and showed his mastery over the genre. It was *Sadgati*, the first tele film made for Doordarshan. But that was the only relaxation he ever allowed himself.

It is difficult to say which aspect of the New Indian Cinema put him off. He was a basically apolitical liberal humanist and probably did not like the overtly left leanings of some of the new film makers. Besides, Ray strongly felt that producers must get fair return on their investment, and it is possible that he was not happy about the indifference of some young film-makers towards box-office. Ray also believed in the virtue of solid storyline—a lasting influence of Hollywood cinema—and never appreciated the non-narrative, non-linear structure, so fashionable in the New Wave movies. It might be a combination of all these factors which kept him at a distance from his younger, more vibrant colleagues. On the other hand, the younger generation was also very much in awe of his genius and that made any interaction quite difficult.

It is Ray's other illustrious contemporary, Ritwik Kumar Ghatak, who had a much closer relationship with the New Wave film-makers. Haunted by the partition of Bengal, Ghatak's cinema is always within a definite time frame and reflects a particular milieu. Ghatak's films had a tremendous force and vitality and it was totally Indian—in both concept and treatment. His use of myths and legends was also strikingly original. In the mid-sixties, Ghatak spent a few years as the Vice-Principal of the Pune Film Institute and was a big hit with the students. Some of them—Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, and to some extent, John Abraham—later emerged as leading lights of the New Cinema Movement. There was no direct

influence as such because it is impossible to copy or clone Ghatak, yet the shadow of Ghatak has loomed large over the Movement. Ghatak himself became a part of it when the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) helped him to make his last film *Jukti, Takka O Gappo*, but by that time Ghatak was an exhausted man, both physically and artistically.

This is also the right occasion to remember the contributions of two other film-makers—both dead and forgotten. In spite of his close association with the Bollywood, K A Abbas has always tried to break the trappings of the commercial cinema. His first film was *Dharti Ke Lal*, an adaption of a play of Indian Peoples Theatre Association into a film. It was a story about the Great Bengal Famine. Like the play, the film was totally deglamourized and Abbas used all non-professional actors—one of them was Tripti Mitra, who subsequently became the prime donna of the Bengali stage. The film was shown in Moscow, Paris and London. In 1954, he made *Munna*, the first Hindi Film since *Alam Ara*, which had neither songs nor dances. In late sixties, he shot into fame as he successfully went upto the Supreme Court to retain a kissing scene in his film *A Tale of Four Cities* and forced the Government single-handedly to appoint a commission to look into the whole issue of physical intimacy on the silver screen. The problem with Abbas was that he was basically a writer and journalist who never bothered to update his craft of film making. That is why Raj Kapoor made so many hits out of his storyline—all mega RK hits from *Awara* to *Bobby* were based on stories by Abbas—but most of his own films fell flat on the box-office. Abbas went on making his own slightly archaic type of cinema till the late Seventies but, like Ghatak, New Cinema Movement came too late for him and it is a bit ironical that perhaps posterity will remember him as the man who gave the break to Amitabh Bacchan.

Another forgotten pioneer was Nemai Ghosh. After Partition, when thousands of refugees crossed the border

and poured into the newly-created state of West Bengal, Ghosh depicted their bitter struggle for survival in his film *Chinnamool* (The Uprooted). Technically the film had its shortcomings, but there was a passion throbbing throughout the movie that inspired two young aspiring film makers—Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak. Six years before *Pather Panchali*, Ghosh, a cinematographer by profession, took his camera out of the studios and actually shot at refugee camps. Later Ghosh migrated to Madras (now Chennai) and made a couple of realistic Tamil films before he switched to full-time cinematography. There also he worked with a few well known film makers of the new school. Besides, as an architect of the film society movement in South India, he contributed to the advent of New Cinema in that part of the country. Because of these people, over the years the stage was set for the coming of a new genre of cinema. All it required was a flash point—that was provided when an aspiring producer, out of desperation, locked a film-maker in an empty room with a typewriter for company, forcing him to prepare a film project.

In the late sixties, Mrinal Sen, a contemporary of Ray and a friend of Ghatak, was at the end of his tether. He had a string of flops and did not know what to do next. In Bombay, he was chatting with his producer-friend Arun Kaul who told him about a new scheme of the Film Finance Corporation, a public sector undertaking. FFC had taken a decision to help non-commercial film-makers with soft loans. Kaul insisted that Sen must apply for one, while Sen was a little diffident. To force the issue, Kaul locked Sen into his office, providing him enough ration and writing materials and threatening not to open the door till he produced a script. Enjoying his newly acquired status of a prisoner, Sen remembered a Bengali short story which he not only liked, but had purchased its film rights ten years ago. Based on that story, he typed out an eight page treatment and, with the consent of his 'jailor', submitted to the FFC. After a lot of procedural wrangles, the corporation sanctioned a loan of one and a

half lakh rupees—an absurdly low amount even thirty years ago—and *Bhuvan Shome* was made.

To the surprise of everybody, including its maker, *Bhuvan Shome* was a commercial success all over the country and Sen could easily repay his loan. The success was unexpected because Sen violated every rule of the book—he selected a story which nobody thought had film potential, he picked up his cast and crew who were totally new and unknown in Bollywood, he had a leading man who was not a hero and not even remotely looked like one (in fact, Utpal Dutt was made to look much older than his actual age). There was no villain, no chase or song-and-dance sequence and the film was in black-and-white. In an era, when films were advertised as ‘One Crore Colour Colossus’³, things could not have been more different.

After three decades, with the benefit of hindsight, one can see that *Bhuvan Shome* fulfilled the yearning for a change which was evident in all spheres of our lives. If we look at the political scenario, the undivided Indian national Congress tasted its first electoral defeat in 1967, providing the combined opposition the first chance to come to power in a number of states. In cinema, the decade saw the passing away of old masters like Mehboob Khan and Bimal Roy and the romantically tragic Guru Dutt. As *Bhuvan Shome* became a hit, Raj Kapoor’s star-studded *Mera Naam Joker* bombed. V Shantaram gave up all his socially conscious themes and concentrated on exploiting the dancing potential of Sandhya. There was a vacuum somewhere and *Bhuvan Shome* occupied that space and became the fulcrum of a new movement. Mrinal Sen was right when he mused in an uncharacteristic nostalgia mood:

In mid-sixties, when the wind started shifting and I smelt a certain freshness in the air, I, like some of my colleagues and fellow-travellers, felt an irresistible urge for a change. I thought it was good enough time for me to launch a breakway from the existing

conventions and try my hand at creating a new one.⁴

The financial success of *Bhuvan Shome* encouraged FFC, headed by the veteran journalist B K Karanjia, to become more generous to the budding film makers and in the next few years a significant number of directors were financed by the Corporation. They included, among others, Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, Basu Chatterjee, Avtar Kaul and M S Sathyu. The movement reached its watershed with Shyam Benegal's *Ankur*. The significance of Benegal was that he was the first New Wave filmmaker who did not come out of the FFC stable, but had a private producer to finance him. That made it clear that this genre of film had a market of its own. Within five years of *Bhuvan Shome*, new cinema acquired a distinct identity and branched out like a parallel stream, totally independent of the mainstream commercial movies. Another contribution of Benegal was to launch a star system of the new cinema. Many of its stars—Shabani Azmi, Samita Patil, Nasserudin Shah, Om Puri, Amrish Puri, Kulbushan Kharbanda—were Benegal discoveries who later migrated to the commercial fold.

The movement became a truly pan-Indian one when the South, the bastion of the mainstream cinema, came under its influence. The first salvo was fired in Karnataka when Pattabhi Rama Reddy made a film out of U R Ananthamurthy's classic *Samskara*. This developed into a major trend as Girish Karnad and B V Karanth joined hands to make some remarkable movies. But this combination was too good to last long. Soon, Karnad lost interest in film direction and concentrated on acting and play-writing while Karanth went back to theatre. For some time, a group of young Kannada film-makers like Girish Kasaravalli, T S Ranga and T S Nagabharana kept the flag flying, but the Malayalam cinema remained in the forefront of the new cinema movement. While it was led by the two stalwarts, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and G Aravindan, a cluster of younger people sustained the

movement. Gopalakrishnan and some of his friends in the early seventies thought about making film through co-operatives, and they even formed a society which produced a few films. The idea, though noble, could not be sustained for long time. In Bengal, Sen was ably supported by Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Gautam Ghosh, Nabyendu Chatterjee and Aparna Sen—all of them had carved out their own niches. These and many other names have become synonymous with the new cinema movement.

Bhuvan Shome is considered a light and charming film about how a stern incorruptible railway officer was bowled over by the rustic charm of an innocent village belle. At the end, instead of punishing her corrupt husband, Shome Sahab gave him a plum posting, where he could earn a few extra bucks. Sen ended his film with a little rider—should we condone corruption for the humanization of a bureaucrat? For the first time in our socio-cultural context, the question of corruption was viewed from a different angle.

The socio-economic paradigm and an emphasis on the third world reality almost became a signature tune of the movement. It was also an assertion that cinema should be an instrument of social change, not a mere tool of entertainment. Poverty, exploitation of the rural and urban poor, vulgarity of the rich, the caste system, the callousness of the administrators, the brutalization of the authorities, and overall, the all-pervading social changes—these are the themes that come back again and again in new cinema. One can point out that these themes are as old as hills and even sixty years ago, films like *Acchut Kanya* were made. But the difference was that the new breed of film-makers were not ready to compromise and dilute their message with songs and dances; and, secondly, they handle the film medium much better.

Veteran film critic Chidananda Dasgupta feels that the new wave film-makers came from a privileged class and being highly sensitive human beings, their works reflect their sense of guilt. According to him:

In this context, art for art's sake has a touch of obscene about it. The New Cinema expiates modern India's sense of guilt over its persistent legacy of privilege; this gives it a purpose and a source for poignant, vigorous cinema.⁵

The movement did not grow in isolation. It depended heavily on modern Indian literature, which was growing through similar turmoils. Both *Bhuvan Shome* and *Samaskara*, the two pivotal films, were based on published literary texts. In Maharashtra, Dr. Jabbar Patel picked up some of Vijay Tendulkar's plays for his films while Mani Kaul experimented with the Mohan Rakesh play, *Ashad Ka Ek Din*. Even Satyajit Ray came down from the ethereal world of Tagore and Bibhutibhushan and forsaking his lyrical style, made films based on bestsellers of Shankar and Sunil Gangapadhyay. It was this quest for reality that drew both Ray and Sen simultaneously to explore the literary genius of Premchand. But probably the last word in the fusion of literature and cinema is Mani Kaul's *Satha Se Uthta Aadmi*, a non-narrative film using the stories, poems and even essays of the noted Hindi writer, Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh. Other important writers whose work was translated into celluloid included Manik Bandyopadhyay, Ramapada Choudhury, M T Vasudevan Nair, Nirmal Verma, Ramesh Bakshi and Jainendra Jain.

Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964 was another big turning point in our socio-cultural history as that marked the end of the era of stability. Over the next decade, the society was rocked by violence and it was reflected in the New Indian Cinema. As the Seventies moved towards Eighties, the violence that ran wild was slowly contained—the spring fire of Naxalism in the East and some parts of South, terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir, mafia murders in the Western coast, movement of Tamil Eelam in South. Ultimately, it paved the way for negotiated settlement. But the violence remained inside like a simmering fire, as reflected in the writings of

Vasudevan Nair and Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, in the ennui of Adoor Gopalakrishnan's *Elippathayam*, in the cold hatred of Nabyendu Chatterjee's *Sarisreep*, or in the silent fury of Govind Nihalani's *Aakrosh*.

The movement reached its crescendo in the early eighties. Indian cinema got its pride of place in a number of major international film festivals while most of the accolades went to seniors like Sen, Benegal and Gopalakrishnan. Some of the younger crowd also made their presence felt. At home, films like *Chakra* and *Ardh Satya* became box office hits, accepting the challenge from the commercial world. This generated a lot of excitement and optimists started dreaming of 'cross-pollination of talents between the big and small budget camps'⁶, which would make the dividing line between art and commercial films disappear. But such optimism only faltered to deceive.

The decline of the movement started in the late eighties and ironically, Mrinal Sen who was the catalyst to usher in the movement, was, to some extent, destined to be its prophet of doom. Much was expected from his *Genesis*, a big-budget multinational project with a dream star cast, which was supposed to be an epic film in the form of a parable. The film was neither an artistic nor a commercial success. Right from the end-seventies, Sen had developed a sort of Midas touch as far as art cinema was concerned and this sudden failure was unnerving for both him and the movement.⁷ But there was a bigger shock to follow. Ray's film *Ganashatru* flopped at the box-office and had to be quitely withdrawn from cinema halls. Bengal has never treated its most illustrious son in such a cavalier manner in the last couple of decades. Whatever might be Ray's views about the New Cinema, no one ever questioned his status as the fountainhead of good cinema. This twin failure clearly indicated that all was not well with the kingdom of Denmark. The audience was no longer attracted by this type of cinema.

The decline can be linked with some of the major historical developments. A large number of New Wave

film-makers were either committed Marxists or had some distinct left leanings. The disintegration and subsequent disappearance of the Soviet Union from the map was a rude jolt for them. They were shocked and confused and did not know how to react. As we gradually move towards the end of the century, some major socio-political developments dominate the nervous nineties. The mantra of privatization, liberalization and globalization has ushered in a class of new Brahmins—the urban, affluent professional, an upper class society of credit cards, cellular phones and Maruti Esteem cars. The other extreme is the increasing demand for ‘social justice’, a throwback to the Mandal era threatening a polarisation of the society and a steady growth of communalism of different colours and hues. We are right now at a crossroad, and no one yet knows the shape of things to come. While literature and art, in their own way, are trying to come to terms with the new trends, cinema is still in the stage of confusion. That has reduced the once vibrant New Wave to a stagnant cesspool.

If that is the philosophical explanation, then there are quite a few mundane reasons also. There should have been a chain of theatres exclusively for the art cinema circuit—if not all over the country, at least in the four metros and other major cities; but this was never done and the makers of parallel cinema never had a proper exposure. In addition, they always got a raw deal from distributors and exhibitors. This forced these film makers to depend primarily on the international market, particularly the foreign television networks. Official assistance in this regard used to come from the state-owned National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) through its offices abroad. The government’s decision to close down its office abroad—specially the one in London—knocked the bottom out of the movement. For the film makers, what remained was a tiny segment of the home market and for a few lucky ones, a premiere on Doordarshan. The emergence of the video era and the urban elite’s lethargy and apathy to visit a theatre to

watch a movie also contributed to the diminishing commercial viability of those movies.

These reasons are valid enough: yet, there are unmistakable signs of a siege within. Of the founding fathers, Sen became increasingly esoteric, Benegal struck a bad patch after *Kalyug* and Arvindan died, a premature death. There was considerable talent in the next generation, but some of them could not keep their early promises and others got bogged down in the quicksand of poverty, squalor, exploitation and rather simplistic Marxist solutions. At present, for a common viewer, the art cinema stands for boredom and is earmarked for the 'intellectuals', whatever the term may mean. When a mass media become branded for upmarket audience only, such branding becomes its kiss of death. Although charges made by Satyajit Ray in his famous 7th October letter were stoutly refuted by Mrinal Sen and others, there was probably a modicum of truth in the maestro's allegations: some film-makers do make films with an eye on a particular international film festival and communication with the home audience does not get the priority it deserves. That is why the poorer class of the audience would rather go to a masala movie with lots of songs and dances than watch a grim tale of poverty and exploitation, even it might be his own story.

For the New Cinema movement, the present is tense and the future imperfect. Some film makers like Mani Ratnam, Rituparno Ghosh and Jayaraj are trying to put it on a sound commercial basis, without sacrificing the artistic bit. Both Mani Ratnam and Jayaraj are giving a new interpretation to the political cinema—the way Mani Ratnam picked up contemporary themes like terrorism in Kashmir and aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition was strikingly different from his predecessors. Rituparno Ghosh's constituency is the urban, upper class elite population and his searching probes into their existence has been outstanding. But how far their efforts are going to be successful, no one knows—we must leave that to posterity. But there is no doubt that the approximately

fifteen year period from 1970 to 1985 is the most exciting and the brightest chapter in the eighty-five year old annals of the Indian motion picture industry. Never before the cream of cinematic talents from all over the country made a common cause to infuse some vitality in the national cinema, with little support and less resources. It was bliss to be there when all this was happening; to be a film maker or even to be involved in cinema was sheer heaven. □

Notes

1. Both the pieces were subsequently published in Ray's *Our Films, Their films*.
2. It was reported in *the Indian Express* of 7th October 1991.
3. This was how O P Ralhan advertised the Rajendra Kumar-Sharmila Tagore starrer *Talash*. Incidentally both *Talash* and *Bhuvan Shome* were made in the same year.
4. Mukhopadhyay, *The Maverick Maestro* (Harper Collins, 1995), pp 66.
5. Aruna Vasudev and Philipe Lenglet (ed), *the New Cinema: A Wave Or a Future?* pp 39–53 *Indian Cinema Superbazar*, (Vikash 1983)
6. See Manojit Lahiry's article pp 38 op.Cit.
7. Sen has not yet recovered from the set back. In the last twelve years, he has made just three films, which is amazing restraint for a man who was a one-film-a-year film-maker.

SPORTS: SOME SUCCESSES, SOME FAILURES

Kishore Bhimani

The magic hour of freedom, coming as it did so soon after World War II, obviously carried with it the urgency of national reconstruction, of getting used to the new identity and its responsibilities. And yet such an important aspect of healthy living as Sports could not be ignored. India on emergence as an independent Republic, did not carry with it any baggage of outstanding sporting excellence. Yes, there were the gold medals in hockey, a sport played by a handful of countries; some isolated athletic performances, by no means of enduring international class; some tennis and a kudo or two in the colonial discipline of cricket.

The authors of the Indian Constitution and the founding fathers of Indian democracy were busy with the affairs of state soon after this country's tryst with destiny and there was little immediately in the way of a programme to promote sports. That would come much later. But the new awareness of freedom, the new found pride and the confidence that comes from a sense of equality with the rest of humanity would also translate into sporting achievements, albeit in the years ahead.

It might be in the fitness of things to concentrate first on the sport of hockey, the only area in which the Indians were established world champions. In the pre-war years, the likes of Dhyan Chand, Roop Singh had been stars on the international firmament and the tradition would carry over after August 1947. With Pakistan as yet

reorganizing its sporting identity, India continued its merry quest for gold through Melbourne, London and Helsinki. But the writing was already on the wall in 1956 with a narrow 1–0 win over the emerging neighbours, and the inevitable happened four years later in Rome as India went down 0–1 to Pakistan to be left with the silver. And even though they would regain glory briefly in 1964 at Tokyo with a 1–0 gold, the era of India's hockey dominance was now over. India would get close, as in 1972 in Munich but the Olympic title would be available to the one time champions only once more—in Moscow in 1980 when the major hockey playing powers around the world had boycotted the Games.

Yes, in between, there was the one bright spark—a sensational win in the World Cup in Kuala Lumpur in 1975. But by now all this was the exception rather than the rule. Indian hockey had taken a drubbing, not able to keep pace with the astro turf arenas, the new playing systems, the vastly demanding fitness regimes in other countries and a certain loss of interest in this game for reasons that are not always clear. The superstars of the forties and the fifties like Leslie Claudius, Randhir Singh, Kishen Lal, Keshav Datt and Udham Singh were now a thing of the past. Their staying power—Claudius playing '48, '52, '56 and '60 Olympics; and Udham Singh starting one Olympics later but carrying on till '64—had now become a legend.

By the seventies, Indian hockey stars like Ashok Kumar, Ajitpal Singh, Aslam Sher Khan, Michael Kindo, Govinda, Surjit and Balbir could be only mentioned alongside the international players like Holland's Kruize, Germany's Baumgart and Pakistan's Tanvir Dar. Indian hockey had come down from the clouds and was back on terra firma. With the eighties and the nineties looming ahead even qualification for the Olympics began to become an issue. It was being said now that not enough money or sponsorship was around; interest in the sport had diminished; too much attention was being paid to cricket and tennis. Be that as it may, hockey would remain Indian sport's problem child.

To cricket then. As in all colonial territories, in India cricket had deep roots. Greats like Ranjitsinghji and the senior Nawab of Pataudi might have played for the colonial masters, but the likes of Lala Amarnath, Vijay Merchant, Nissar and Amar Singh had made waves in the cricketing world in the pre-Independence era. Soon afterwards, cricket became a way of life in free India. No one can really explain the phenomenon, but this most unlikely sport of village greens, extreme leisure, lords and dukes, traditions and quaint rituals, caught the fancy of the Indian psyche. And how?

The arrival of Goddard's West Indians with the mighty three Ws in the side gave a further boost to public interest and the popularity in the international arena of the likes of Umrigar, Mankad, Manjrekar and Gupte added further spice to the following of the game. Even so, the Indians were hardly winning anything. Yes, the spark was occasionally there—the big innings, some bowling sensation—the fielding of an Adhikari or the bowling of a Jasu Patel. But the victories were few and far between. Even in 1962, the Indians thought nothing of losing 0–5 in the West Indies, where Pataudi barely out of college, took over the captaincy of the Indian team as Nari Contractor was struck down by a vicious delivery from Charlie Griffiths. The team had Umrigar, Manjrekar, Jaisimha, Gupte, and a host of established stars, but the defeat was accepted as a matter of course.

The balance was there—India had fine seam bowlers like Ramakant Desai and Dattu Phadkar, spinners like Ghulam Ahmed, Vinoo Mankad and Subhash Gupte and a host of talented batsmen. Perhaps there was some truth in what is said about winning being a habit—a habit that would first get going in those twin magic tours of the West Indies and England under Ajit Wadekar in 1971.

Pataudi captained the Indian cricket team through the sixties until that summer of '71. He moulded a team that grew in stature and began to believe in itself; that benefited immensely from his charismatic leadership. But perhaps new captaincy would provide the vital spark.

That Vijay Merchant casting vote is now history. It is that which gave Ajit Wadekar the leadership and a new era of Indian cricket began as an Indian team, a blend of youth and experience, set out for the spring tour of the Caribbean islands. It can be argued with some justification that Gary Sobers' side was a little long in the tooth, missing the normal quota of fierce pace bowlers and in the process of transition that would lead it into the mid-seventies with a brand new look and a fantastic reputation.

But Wadekar's men, some novices like Gavaskar and Vishwanath and other seasoned campaigners like Salim Durrani, Jaisimha and Sardesai, had to break the jinx that Indians did not really win overseas and certainly not on the pacy wickets of the West Indies. Sardesai and Gavaskar were the heroes of that tour which also set the stage for the star turn of Indian spin bowling. There were some interesting fallouts of the Indian victory in the Caribbean—the local populace of Indian origin, especially in Trinidad and Guyana, walked taller and could proudly recount stories of the country of their origin and Sunil Gavaskar became a cult figure at a tender age. Lord Relator wrote a calypso about him which is chanted to this day wherever cricket is played in those islands in the sun.

Later that year, Indians would rewrite another chapter of cricketing history by defeating England in Old Blighty to give Ajit Wadekar dual successes in the same calendar year. The Oval Test which India won starred that enigmatic leg spin bowler Bhagwat Chandrasekhar in an era when leg spin, especially in England, appeared to have gone out of currency.

It was a three timer for Wadekar as India then went on to beat England, under veteran Tony Lewis, at home in the winter of '72-'73. Having broken all records, India had come of age in the great game. The cyclical aspect of the game would catch up with India in England in the summer of '74. It seems almost as if the tour was organized with unseemly haste, only three years after India's

victorious one. But the vengeance of the hosts was wreaked mercilessly, as followers of the game will forget neither the comprehensive defeats nor the 'summer of 42'.

The return journey to the West Indies was less traumatic. In the spring of 1976, Bishen Bedi led his spin quartet alongside batting twins Gavaskar and Vishwanath to take on a resurgent Caribbean outfit which boasted the likes of Roberts, Holding and Richards and led by big Clive Lloyd. After a humiliating defeat at Barbados, India bounced back to level the series at Trinidad, and going down in the messy decider at Kingston in the face of rather controversial 'bodyline' bowling. There were some great performances on the tour with both bat and ball.

In the tours that followed, India lost to Australia 2-3 in a memorable series which paralleled Kerry Packer's World Series. But historically, this tour also saw the decline of spin quartet, whose demolition would finally happen during India's visit to Pakistan in the autumn of 1978 where a team led by Mushtaq Mohammed defeated the Indians 2-0 to set a new trend of skippers of either side of the sub-continent losing their jobs after losing their tours. Bishen Bedi went out after the massacre at Karachi just as Asif Iqbal would go out after Sunil Gavaskar's Indians defeated the Pakistanis also 2-0 in '79-'80.

Now in the habit of winning, the Indians had defeated the depleted Australians under Kim Hughes in the same season. In the eighties, the great milestone for Indian cricket was the annexing of the World Cup in '83. It was sweet victory since the two earlier efforts by India in limited over cricket had been pathetic.

The triumph at Lord's also meant a new inspiration for the Indian team in fielding, fitness and running between wickets, all essential for one-day cricket and under the new skipper Kapil Dev, things looked up in spite of the occasional ups and downs. Kapil Dev led from the front just as Gavaskar had done. There were one or two other limited overs successes. They won the so-called World Championships of Cricket in Australia and

immediately afterward, the Sharjah Cup. All this led to the sub-continent winning the right to host the World Cup in 1987, an event that was handled with commendable expertise by the two not-too-friendly countries.

While the cyclical aspect of the game kept India in the limelight at times, like when they beat England 2–0 in 1986, they also suffered some defeats as in Pakistan in '82–'83. But the late eighties will be remembered best for the emergence of the cricket superstar Sachin Tendulkar whose musical chairs leadership alongside Azharuddin was reminiscent of the captaincy wars of the eighties between Gavaskar and Kapil Dev—an obviously inevitable offshoot of Indian cricket. Other stars also arrived on India's cricketing firmament. Saurabh Ganguly did Calcutta's millions proud with a string of superb innings in both five-day and one-day cricket. Almost as if taking a cue from the era of Bhagwat Chandrasekhar, the age of Shane Warne and Mushtaq Mohammed now threw up India's Anil Kumble but a replacement for the great Kapil Dev was still awaited. With the decade of the nineties drawing to close, Ajit Agarkar was the cynosure of all eyes looking for another exciting all-rounder.

The sport of hockey might have declined and cricket gone to dizzying heights, but football retained its mass appeal especially in West Bengal and Kerala in the five decades after Independence. For reasons that are not quite apparent, this great popularity never really translated into significant improvement in standards.

Club and state loyalties took precedence over international competition, largely because this country's performance at the international level was not particularly memorable. The purple patch of Indian soccer perhaps was in fifties and sixties when the soccer boys brought home some medals. Those days there was a clear distinction between professional and amateur football.

Calcutta was the home of Indian soccer where clubs like Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammendan Sporting held sway. Players from round the country came

and played here in front of packed houses. Under Sailen Manna, India won the gold in the Asiad in Delhi and in 1956 the country, had the distinction of being placed fourth in the Olympics at Melbourne under Badru Bannerji. Under the legendary S A Rahim of Hyderabad, the outfit reached unprecedented heights—to an extent that in the next couple of years there was a lively debate whether the team should take part in the Asian Games or take a shot at the World Cup!

India did pick up the gold at Jakarta with a 'dream team' that had in it stars like P K Bannerji, Chuni Goswami, Arun Ghosh, Jarnail Singh, Kempiah, Thangaraj and others. In 1970 India won the Asian Bronze with Nayeem as captain. Nayeem would go on to become a celebrated coach and win the Dronacharya award. In 1974, India won the joint gold in the junior Asian soccer. What happened from now on requires close examination. India just could not keep pace with the giant strides in soccer around the world, where it was becoming a high profile, big money sport supported by the astronomic finance of mega corporations. Here, in contrast, the approach was still low key and even in Asia, in tournaments like the Merdeka and others, India continued to slip. Yes, there were still instances of individual talent—Manjeet Singh and Inder Singh; Brahmanand and the first true professional from Hyderabad, Mohammed Habib and Bengal's Sudhir Karmakar.

Also there was during the eighties and nineties the influx of foreign players who actually sought contracts with Indian clubs and flourished in the more liberal foreign exchange environment. Thus it was the skills of the likes of Majid Baksar, Jamshed Nassiri and Cheema Okerie were on display on the Calcutta Maidan. Even the Bangladeshis, who had been showing vast improvement over the recent decade, came across the border to play in Calcutta. The paradox by the time the 1998 World Cup came along was that while hundreds of millions watched the event on TV, they lamented the stagnant nature of Indian soccer talent.

In contrast was the game of billiards and snooker, where the Indians soon after Independence picked up a clutch of world titles and continued to hold sway in the green baize game well into the nineties. The game had come to life in the many railway institutes and similar clubs all over the country and snooker has the reputation of having been invented as a game in India. The first superstar of the three ball game of billiards was Wilson Jones who picked up the World title in the late fifties, much to the delight of the small coterie of supporters of the game.

Sports lovers in general had their reservations about this triumph since they felt that only about eight countries played this game competitively, and that numerical support even in these countries was limited. But in the sixties and the seventies, there was marked enlargement of support, even though restricted to former colonies. But India continued to produce the champions—Michael Ferreira, Om Agarwal, Geet Sethi and Manoj Kothari—all carried the World Champion tag at some time or the other.

Agarwal and Sethi were vastly proficient in the 22-ball game of snooker, which suddenly acquired a big money game status in the eighties and after. Here again India with limited corporate sponsorship and other handicaps, could not keep pace with the superstars like Steve Davis, Jimmy White, Alex Higgins, Steven Hendry and the like. Even so, at the amateur level, Sethi fought on valiantly for the tricolour at the international level and there were great prospects ahead in 1998 with the two disciplines scheduled to be part of the Bangkok Asian Games. The lone Indian on the professional circuit was Yasin Merchant who only briefly had Sethi for company. But it was obvious that India's dominance on the green top table would remain at the amateur level only in snooker while billiards would be always a fair target at both levels.

While the title of world champions would continue to elude India in tennis, there was enough in the history of

the game in the country to make any Indian proud. From the days of Ghouse Mohammed and Dilip Bose, there had always been high level participation but it reached its zenith with the arrival of Ramanath Krishnan in the early sixties. In spite of his tame serve in what was soon to become a serve and volley game, Krishnan managed to make waves in international tennis reaching the Wimbledon semi-finals. He also spearheaded an Indian Davis Cup team that defeated Brazil, rescued by the maestro from the brink of defeat.

And yet India's big moment in international Olympics of tennis would come in '74 with the arrival of the great stylist Vijay Amritraj. Alongside brother Anand and Jasjit Singh, Vijay listed vital victories to squeeze past the Australians at Calcutta and defeated the Russian squad of Metreveli and Korotkov at Pune to move into what was the challenge round of the tournament. Here, unfortunately, India was denied a crack at the world title, since in the other quarter final, South Africa had got the better of Italy to qualify to meet India. With India's clear policy of not having any sporting contact with apartheid-afflicted Republic of South Africa, India had to forego the challenge round encounter.

Jaidip Mukherjea and Premjit Lall, both from Calcutta, had seen their careers run alongside the elder Krishnan and both had been part of the challenge round team to Australia. This abortive attempt at the world title was repeated in the era of the Amritrajs as India met Sweden in the final showdown in 1987. After a period of rather mediocre talent, the mid-nineties brought to the surface Leander Paes who would get India a bronze medal in the Olympics as well as some memorable Davis Cup wins, the most striking being in Frejus in France. But at the individual level, it was the partnership of Paes (whose father Vece had been a hockey Olympian) with Mahesh Bhupati that, for the first time, saw Indian doubles pairing being repeatedly seeded in Grand Slam tournaments and picking up some fine prizes. Older than Paes but sharing with him the glory of Frejus was Ramesh Krishnan.

In the game of golf, India never really had any pretensions to international excellence. While tennis, snooker and cricket developed the big money tag only in the recent years, golf like pro boxing was always a big money sport. And yet this country produced some fine amateur golfers even in the early days. Vikramjit Singh, Ashoke Malik and Billoo Sethi were amongst the successful competitive golfers in the post-Independence years. While they were never going to give serious competition to the likes of Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer, they would hold their own on the Asian circuit. When golf was accepted as an Asian Games discipline, India was in the forefront with Laxman Singh winning the gold and Rajiv Mohta the silver in the 1982 Games in Delhi.

Apart from Harmeet Singh Kahlon winning the individual honours in the Nomura Cup where they had earlier attained a team success, there were some outstanding professionals on the circuit like Ali Sher, Rohtas Singh, Basad Ali and one or two others. Jeev Milka Singh kept alive the 'second generation' glory like Leander Paes had done in tennis and Gaurav Ghei, Arjun Singh and Arjun Atwal had their moments on the Asian circuit. The nineties was the era of designer golf courses being set up around the country and the new century, it anticipated, will bring forth better golfers.

While at the Olympic level, India suffered from a paucity of medals in the post-Independence era, there were quite a few in the Asian Games in athletics track and field and in some newly introduced disciplines.

In track events, the outstanding successes over the years have been Milkha Singh and P T Usha. The 'flying Sikh' was fourth in the 400 metres at Rome and P T Usha was fourth in the 1984 Olympics 400. Perhaps it was a reflection on India's limited athletic achievements that Usha could return, after becoming a mother, 14 years later and still lead the national squad. Shiny Abraham, Parveen Kumar, G S Randhawa and Henry Rebello were

others who had had different levels of success at the Olympic level.

Wrestling is an ancient Indian sport and there have been some fine performances in the international arena like K D Jadav whose Olympic bronze in bantam was the only one until Leander's in the nineties. Bishambar Singh, Sudesh Kumar and Prem Nath were other important campaigners.

Another Olympic sport, that of shooting saw some enthusiastic performers—from Dr. Karni Singh of Bikaner through Randhir Singh and finally to Jaspal Rana in the nineties—just as archery saw the emergence of Limba Ram.

Badminton would produce yet another Indian who shone at the international level. Prakash Padukone showed a professional attitude to his sport by choosing to make a temporary home overseas where he could train and acquire valuable experience. □

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